

# The Colorful Diamond Zone

Many people will tell you that the most desirable diamonds are colorless or near-colorless. Interestingly enough, this is only true to a certain extent.



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Unlike some gem species like sapphire, tourmaline, garnet and others, which are known for their rainbow-like variety of colors, diamond is the only gem that occurs in all 12 basic colors, and infinite combinations of these colors.

According to color intensity, these diamonds qualify for classification within the "Fancy Color" range.

Most consumers are aware about the four C's of diamonds - Color, Clarity, Cut and Carat weight. For fancy colored diamonds, the color is by far the most important value factor.

The higher the color saturation, the higher the value. This is due to the extreme rarity of natural fancy colored diamonds.



A Fancy Intense Pink or Blue diamond may actually have eye visible internal characteristics, pointing to a medium-to-low

clarity grade, and still be worth tens of thousands, and in some rare cases hundreds of thousands of dollars per carat. No colorless or near-colorless diamond with eye visible imperfections will ever come close to such values.

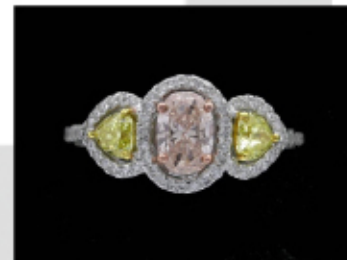
In addition, the Cut is not taken into consideration to the same extent as it would be for white diamonds and small natural Purplish Red, Purple or Green diamonds will carry huge price tags, simply because of their rare colors.

What makes these fancy colored diamonds so rare?

When we look at mining and extraction of diamonds, we note that more than ten tons of earth and gravel have to be screened in order to discover one carat of rough diamond of jewelry quality. This one carat rough stone will yield, on average, half of its weight once polished.

An average estimate indicates that diamond mines produce fancy color diamonds at a rate of 1 to 2 carats for every 3000 carats extracted. Approximately eighty five percent (85%) are either brown or yellow, or a mixture of both. The other colors such as red, pink, and blue command much higher prices per carat than any other gemstone and colorless diamond. A record auction price, set at Christie's New York

in 1987, reached a little over 900,000 US\$ for a purplish-red diamond weighing just below one carat. There are probably not more than 15 such diamonds in existence in the world, making them much sought after collectors items. In 2010 at a Sotheby's auction, a rare 24.78 carat pink diamond broke the world record price for a jewel at auction, selling for more than \$46 million.



Colored diamonds have increased in popularity without the need for extensive marketing campaigns or advertisements.

The unique and stunning colors of these very rare gems triggered a sudden awareness during the late sixties - early seventies and their fame was enhanced further at jewelry auctions at Christie's and Sotheby's. As a result, prices for fancy colors have risen significantly over the past 30 years.

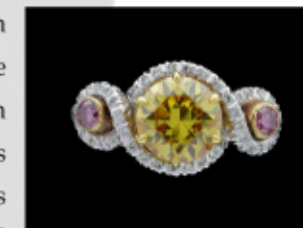
Some colors, especially pinks and blues, have increased in value by about 30 to 40 times from the early seventies until now.

Not all colors are produced in the different mining locations around the world and there is often a direct correlation between the colors and the location where the stones were mined. African mines mostly generate the yellow ranges of colors: for example, Congo yields yellow, orange and orange-



brown diamonds; Sierra Leone and Angola mainly yellow, South Africa is known for its pink, blue and yellow stones, whereas in the Central African Republic some fabulous mixtures of green-yellow ("Lime") and green-brown can emerge. These last ones are known to have "electric" colors, often in combination with strong fluorescence.

The famous Australian Argyle mines produce mostly pink and brown colors while Brazilian mines produce a variety of colors ranging from yellow and green to blue and pink.



So how does one describe fancy colored diamonds?

Natural fancy colors are described according to internationally accepted standards, in the simplest way possible. Nomenclature is determined by three distinct elements. First is HUE which is the attribute of color such as red, yellow, or blue. Second is the TONE, which describes the relative lightness to darkness. Third is SATURATION, which is the intensity of the color.

However, the main difficulty in describing color is when there is a secondary and even a third color present, also known as the 'modifier(s)'. The predominant color is always expressed as a noun whereas the modifying color precedes the main color, for example 'Brownish Pink'. When color is expressed using two nouns like 'orange-

yellow' then it means that both colors are evenly present. The intensity could be expressed using the following terminology, from light to most intense:

For example yellow diamonds would be described as

- Natural fancy light yellow
- Natural fancy yellow
- Natural fancy intense yellow
- Natural fancy vivid yellow

For somewhat darker colors, 'fancy deep' and 'fancy dark' are used to describe the intensities.

There is much more to be discovered as we explore the fascinating world of colored diamonds, including some historically significant stones. All this will be revealed in our next issue.

## About International Gemological Institute

The International Gemological Institute (IGI), was established in Antwerp in 1975 and is the largest independent gem certification and appraisal institute worldwide, with offices in Antwerp, New York, Hong Kong, India, Bangkok, Tokyo, Dubai, Tel Aviv, Cavelese, Toronto, Los Angeles and Shanghai. In India, IGI has 3 laboratories in Mumbai and one each in Kolkata, New Delhi, Thrissur, Surat, Chennai and Ahmedabad. IGI is ISO (International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001: 2000) certified in four countries.

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