Indian Arts and Crafts Act

The value and price of turquoise is also determined by the reputation of the mine and the rarity of the turquoise. Many mines, such as Lone Mountain, #8, Lander Blue, and Bisbee mines, are highly regarded for the color, matrix, and history of the turquoise they contain. The most commonly marketed American turquoise is from the Sleeping Beauty and Kingman mines in Arizona.

BUYING TIPS

- When purchasing from a dealer, choose one with a good reputation.
- Examine the color, clarity, and matrix of the turquoise.
- Request a written receipt that includes all the vital information about your purchase, including:
  - name of artist and their Tribal affiliation
  - name of the mine from which the turquoise was extracted
  - whether the turquoise is natural, stabilized, or treated
  - where the stone was purchased
  - price of the turquoise piece
  - date of the purchase
  - business address where piece was purchased.
- Realize that authentic handmade pieces may be expensive…if a price seems too good to be true, be sure to ask more questions about the item and its maker.

The State of New Mexico’s Indian Arts and Crafts Sales Act, unlike the federal Indian Arts and Crafts Act, requires the seller to disclose in writing the type of materials used. Under New Mexico law, a seller’s failure to give the required written disclosure to a consumer violates the State law and may entitle the consumer to a repayment of the purchase price upon the return of the item. For more information, please consult www.nmag.gov or call 1-800-678-1508.

For a free brochure on the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, including how to file a complaint about the fraudulent marketing of Indian art and craftwork, contact:

INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS BOARD
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C.  20240
1-888-ART-FAKE   WWW.IACB.DOI.GOV
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MINES

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Turquoise is considered treated* when it has been -

- Oiled or waxed – soaked or cooked in oil or wax to darken the color
- Enhanced – a patented process to darken the color of low or medium grade turquoise to imitate a higher grade color
- Stabilized – turquoise combined with colorless resins (plastics) under a vacuum or pressure to harden the stone and darken the color
- Blocked – chips and fragments are mixed with epoxy to form blocks for cutting
- Dyed – a pigment is added to deepen the stone’s color or create a “matrix” design within a treated stone

*New Mexico law provides more detailed definitions for materials.

**DENSITY AND COLOR**
Density and/or hardness add to the depth of color. Natural blue and green turquoise stones are the most sought after and have many color variations. However, neither of these two colors is more valuable than the other. The most common turquoise color is white. White turquoise, referred to as “chalk,” is generally too soft to cut or polish and is not typically graded as a gemstone. Chalk and low grade turquoise have open pores within their structures and can only be used when “treated” to enhance hardness, density, color, clarity, or matrix.

**IS IT NATURAL?**
Most consumers will ask if the turquoise is “real,” but the question to ask is if it is “natural” turquoise.

**CLARITY AND MATRIX**
Uniformity of color, clarity and matrix determines the value of turquoise. The higher grade turquoise has greater clarity and deeper color. If a matrix is present, it will appear as tiny veins or dots of other rock within the turquoise, which can be golden, brown, black, white, or sienna in color. An evenly distributed matrix is desired. The rarest matrix, “spider web” turquoise, has a natural and uniform matrix that is evenly laced throughout the gemstone.