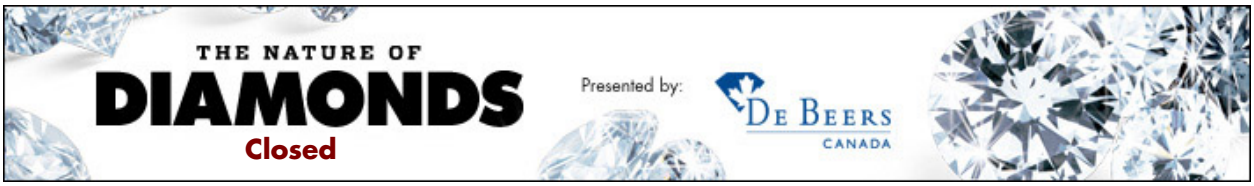

About Diamonds

What are Diamonds?

In basic terms, a diamond is carbon in its most concentrated form. Except for trace impurities such as boron and nitrogen, a diamond is composed solely of carbon, the chemical element that is fundamental to all life. Mined from deep within the earth's crust, these rough stones are cut and polished to reveal their natural fire and brilliance.

Where are Diamonds Found?

Today diamonds are mined in about 25 countries and on every continent except for Europe and Antarctica. For centuries, India was thought to be the only source of diamonds, but in the early 18th century this thinking changed when important sources were discovered in Brazil. Since then, there have been major finds in numerous African countries, Siberian Russia, Australia and Canada. The most common characteristic of diamond deposits is the presence of kimberlite and lamproite. This type of volcanic rock, which often forms in vertical structures known as "pipes," is the most common source of mined diamonds today.

The Four Cs

Not all diamonds are created equal. Each one is evaluated by four main characteristics. By measuring a stone's cut, colour, clarity and carat, one can begin to determine its overall value.

Cut: The "cut" of a diamond refers to its proportions, as opposed to its shape. Every diamond, regardless of its shape, gets it brilliance by allowing the light that enters through its top to be reflected and dispersed back out. If the cut of a stone is too deep or too shallow, the light that enters escapes through the diamond's bottom, significantly reducing its sparkle.

Colour: While diamonds are found in every colour of the rainbow, the majority are in the white range. The Gemological Institute of America (GIA) has developed a rating system for white diamonds that ranges from D (colourless) to Z (light yellow). A totally colourless diamond allows light to pass through it more easily, and therefore is always preferred.

Clarity: The clarity of a diamond is determined by the location and amount of flaws, or "inclusions," that it has. Inclusions can interfere with the light passing through the diamond, so the fewer the inclusions, the more beautiful the diamond will be. As with colour, the GIA grades clarity, on a scale from Flawless to Imperfect 3.

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Carat: The weight of a diamond, or carat, is the easiest measurement to determine. The larger the carat weight of a diamond, the more rare and therefore the more valuable it is. While it is most often the carat that is used to describe a diamond's worth, it is important to remember that two diamonds of equal carat can still differ greatly in value due to cut, colour and clarity.

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