

# ROCK TRAILS

Opal photo courtesy of Rockseeker.com



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**Vice President:** Charlene Hacker, 517 270-8061  
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Meetings are held the first Sunday of each month  
at 2:00 PM, at  
201 W. Main St. Morenci, MI 49256

## President's Letter

Our next meeting will be at the clubhouse on August 6, 2023 at 2 PM. The Fulton County Fair is right around the corner beginning on September 1. Bring your ideas to the meeting. We have a great time there.

Our scholarship winners took center stage in last month's Rock Trails. I was quite surprised to see D J Newman, one of last year's scholarship winners awarded for outstanding pitching for Bowling Green State University's Baseball team. Congratulations to DJ Newman from last year, and Megan Haselman, and Hannah Baker, this year's scholarship winners.

My 11 year old grandson, Ivan, and I participated in the Kunkle July 4, Independence Day Parade driving the 1922 REO Speedwagon on behalf of the club. Kunkle, in Williams County is the smallest town with the largest parade. It has never rained on the Kunkle parade in its over 45 years existence. All the participants just show up and the fire department organizers line everyone up throughout the back streets. At 11 AM the parade begins moving down the main street parade route with a Color Guard, Veterans in Uniform, marching band, fire trucks from every department, church and business floats, horses, tractors, old cars and trucks with clowns. Anyone who wants to be part of the parade is invited. As Ivan and I passed in front of the announcers, Bill Priest, announcer at this parade, gave us a great review. Bill Priest is the one who used to be with the Defiance, Ohio television stations, televising and hosting the Kunkle Parade. He had been to our annual Gem and Mineral Show. He had also seen us many times before at this parade.

The firehouse chicken prepared by 5V Barbeque of Wauseon, Ohio was a great finish for the Kunkle July 4 parade.

The fairs, festivals, and parades we participate in are a lot of work but the rewards are worth it for the receiver and giver. See you at the next meeting.

Best regards,  
Eddie

# 5 Best Places To Find Opal In The US: Exploring America's Opal Hotspots

by [Jeremy Hall](#)

Opal is one of the most famous gemstones, and it's easy to see why. With the play of color that emanates from just under the surface, it's one of the few classical gemstones with a distinctive optical effect. While soft, the beauty of opal has made it a favorite for many, and those who are rockhounds often want to hunt their own. Fortunately, there are a few great places in the United States where you can find it.

So, let's take a look at the best places to find opal in the US, so that you can plan your own rockhounding mission and possibly pull a great one from the earth.

## 1. Royal Peacock Mine, Nevada

**Like most of the precious opal localities in the US, the Royal Peacock Mine in Nevada is privately owned. It's also one of the few mines that offer paid digs for opal, offering a unique opportunity for those who want to head out. It's not a cheap trip, but it's one that can be well worth it if you make a great find.**

There are two places that they allow you to dig. For \$190 per person, you can actually mine directly in the banks. This is virgin territory, space cleared underneath the overburden covering most of the precious opal. For \$75 per person, you can also go through the tailings of the mine. The tailings aren't quite as rich but you can still score well here.

**The Royal Peacock Mine produces world-class opal specimens, including black opal and opalized fossils. It's possibly the best opal mine to visit in the United States, as long as you can afford the entry. For more details, you can visit their site and see if it's the right place for you to go seeking opal.**

## **2. Juniper Ridge Opal Mine, Oregon**

**The Juniper Ridge Opal Mine is one of the few places in the United States that regularly turns out high-quality fire opal. These opals are glass-like and range from yellow to a deep red depending on the individual gemstone. This is another private claim, and it's not always clear if they're allowing paid digs at the moment. That said when they do offer them it is a unique opportunity.**

Juniper Ridge Opals are a bit different from the usual precious opal found. These rarely display the fire that makes opal so special, instead, it's the deep saturation of color in the gemstones that are on display. They are generally cut into faceted gemstones, instead of the cabochons seen with the majority of opal.

If you're interested your best bet is to contact the mine owners. While they don't have a traditional website for the mine, they appear to do business mainly through their [Facebook page](#). Contacting them is the best way to see if they're currently open for a paid dig. The fees others have mentioned are a bit steep, but a couple of good opals and the trip will pay for itself.

## **3. Rainbow Ridge Opal Mine, Nevada**

**Another famous opal mine in Nevada, Rainbow Ridge is an expensive paid dig site but it may be well worth it for those who can afford it. Rainbow Ridge produces some of the prettiest precious opals in the United States, at least as far as specimens go. These opals are found in a thick, wet clay that effectively seals in the moisture and makes them prone to crazing (a term for the cracks that emerge in opal as it dries) when removed from the Earth.**

While not generally suitable for jewelry, these opals make incredible specimens. The specimens are generally kept wet by placing them in water, keeping them from crazing while keeping the original beauty of the stone. Those who dig in the tailings may find dried opals, and if these haven't cracked too much they *are* suitable for jewelry.

**You'll pay well for the privilege of digging these. The virgin earth digging is \$700 per day, while the tailings can be searched for a comparatively cheap \$100 per day. If you can afford it, however, there's nothing quite like digging your own opals and you may even strike it rich. Take a look at their website and see if you think it's worth the trip for yourself!**

#### **4. Spencer Opal Mine, Idaho**

**The Spencer Opal Mine is another productive source of precious opal. It's a unique formation, with the opal being found in thin slices in gaps in the rhyolite bedrock. Quite often you'll find that the common opal here actually ends up containing precious opal on the interior. While the material is mainly used for specimens and composite opals like doublets and triplets some of it is large enough to be cut into gemstones.**

These come from a rhyolite and obsidian field, where gas bubbles had left empty places during the cooling process. The opals themselves are a secondary formation, created from silica rich water that seeped into the area over time, solidifying as opal in these tiny spaces.

They also allow for paid digs, like most of the mines listed. There's no price listed for this one, so you'll have to use the contact details from their webpage. It's definitely worth the trip if you can make it out, however. There's a lot of opal to be had and expert cutters who live nearby and can get the most out of the generally thin material you'll dig up.

#### **5. Vernon Parish, Louisiana**

**In Vernon Parish of Louisiana, the Earth hides a bit of a secret. While incredibly hard to find in modern times, this locality is the only known place where Louisiana Sand Opal has been found. This strange sandstone and opal conglomerate captured the imagination before it was determined that mining it really wasn't all that commercially viable. Rare then, and it's even rarer now but those who are in the area may want to try their luck.**

These opals are truly an oddity. Somehow the sandstone in the area became impregnated with a silica-rich fluid. This fluid pressed through the grains of the sandstone before finally solidifying as precious opal. The end effect is an actual sandstone with precious opal visual effects.

**While the majority of it appears to be gone, the occasional piece still shows up in the area. It may not be the hottest ticket on the block when it comes to opal, but it's the one place where you can find a variety that's distinctly American.**

## Did you know?

Well before dinosaurs roamed the earth, over 350 million years ago during the Devonian period, the land we know as Michigan was located near the equator. Covered by a warm, shallow, saltwater sea, the colonial coral hexagonaria percarinata thrived with other marine life in tropical reefs. The earth's plates moved and pushed Michigan north to the 45th parallel and above sea level, which created dry land formations. More recently, about two million years ago, glacial action scraped the earth and spread the fossils across the northern Lower Peninsula, depositing major concentrations in the Petoskey area.

The prehistoric fossil, unique to the Traverse Group rock strata, is called the Petoskey Stone and it became Michigan's official state stone in 1965. Pet-0-Sega, which means "Rays of the Rising Sun" in the Ottawa language, was the birth name given in 1787 to the son of a French fur trader and his Indian wife. Pet-0-Sega grew up in an area northwest of present-day Harbor Springs, became a respected landowner and businessman and, like his father, was recognized as an Ottawa Indian Chief. In 1873 the settlement on the Bear River was named Petoskey in his honor.

Read more at: <https://www.petoskeyarea.com/media/petoskey-stone/>  
From MMS conglomerate

# August 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 INTERNAT'L GEM AND JEWELRY SHOW. SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE NOVI, MI	5 INTERNAT'L GEM AND JEWELRY SHOW. SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE NOVI, MI
6 INTERNAT'L GEM AND JEWELRY SHOW. SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE NOVI, MI	7	8	9	10	11 COPPER COUNTRY GEM AND MINERAL SHOW HOUGHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HOUGHTON	12 COPPER COUNTRY GEM AND MINERAL SHOW HOUGHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HOUGHTON
13 COPPER COUNTRY GEM AND MINERAL SHOW HOUGHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HOUGHTON	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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