



**ROCKHOUND STATION I**

Website and World center for Rock hunters and Treasure hunters

# **A Beginners Guide to Rock Hunting**

by

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**You may give away, this guide freely to who ever you wish so long as it remains in its original form...Sally**

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## **INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD OF THE ROCKHOUND**

**The earth has been forming gemstones and precious metals for billions of years. The bones of early creatures have been preserved for hundreds of millions of years. Ancient man first picked up rock to be used for tools and weapons over 2.5 million years ago. As time progressed they began using metals and fashioning items for all aspects of growing civilizations from stone and metal. Some of these civilizations or some of their peoples and their artifacts were lost in time. Throughout all of these eras, meteors have crashed to earth bringing mysteries of the heavens within our reach.**

**And here we are to find it all.**

**The world of the rockhound is no small world. It is a world rich with adventure and discovery. It begins right in our own backyards but can take us to the depths of the oceans or to the tops of the mountains. It can take us from crafting rock as early man did, by knapping or carving or it can take us into scientific labs where the future is being worked with crystal technologies, where meteorites are studied to help in understanding of the composition of space, or where bones and artifacts are studied to help us develop a map of the past of our species and planet. Yes the world of the rockhound is a large world, indeed. It encompasses all of the life ever on the planet, all of human history, all of the planet's composition, and even the universe beyond.**

**To all of you who are just discovering rockhounding, we hope you enjoy this series of reports and find them useful in helping you to get your hobby off the ground....er, well, maybe I should say get your hobby into ground.**

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## WHO GOES ROCK HUNTING?

**There is no one type of person that becomes a rockhound. Rockhounds are found among all social classes, all age groups, all occupations. The only pre-requisite there is for being a rockhound is for a person to have an interest in rocks, treasure, artifacts, gold, fossils, or anything that can be found created by the earth or left from the past occupants of the planet.**

**You do not need to have any particular education to start rockhounding. Knowledge never hurts, of course, but the lack of a degree in geology, archaeology, or paleontology won't keep you from finding great rocks or treasures. You will be surprised at how much you will learn as you continue your hobby. It just comes with the territory.**

**You do not need to be wealthy to start a rockhounding hobby. If you can afford great equipment, it will be great to have it, but if you can't afford it, you can still work around the lack of luxury. It's not like trying to golf without golf clubs or ski without skis.**

**Your age does not matter. Rockhounding has a blend of benefits for the whole family. It will give you quality time with your children. Hunting will get you all outside to exercise in the fresh air. The interest spans generations, encouraging association of people of all ages and teaching children to value the experience of older associates. Many families can boast multi-generations of rockhounds.**

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## GENERAL EQUIPMENT NEEDS

**As in any hobby, there is some basic equipment you will want to start your hobby. You can, of course, hunt rocks, gems, fossils, and relics with nothing but determination, but there is only so much that you will find just lying in the open for you to just amble by and pick up. Some types of stones are easier to find loose than others of course, but you will need some simple basic equipment to hunt for many. The following list will give you a good idea of what you need to start with.**

- 1. BACKPACK.** You need something to carry your supplies and rocks in.
- 2. ROCK PICK.** I can't even begin to list all of the things you will do with your rock pick. A rock pick makes it easy to pry wedged stones out of the ground, pick crystals out of vugs, break gemstones away from matrix

stone, and pull objects toward you that may be hard to reach. I even use mine to hook objects above me for a bit of a help to climb up or down.

**3. SHOVEL.** Many times you will be someplace that digging is the only great way to recover gems or artifacts. A small fold up shovel is a perfect addition to your tools.

**4. CHISEL.** A chisel is often handy for breaking rocks loose or open while hunting. They are very helpful in freeing crystals without breakage.

**5. GLOVES.** If you are dealing with digging crystals or loosening them from a vug, you definitely want a pair of gloves with you. Crystals can be very sharp. Gloves are a nice plus to help keep your hands clean during general digging as well.

**6. SCREEN.** Some stones are easiest to find by putting dirt into a screen and sifting. You may use a screen to hunt gems such as garnets, apache tears, or sapphires in some habitats.

**7. MAGNIFYING GLASS.** Sometimes you just need to get a closer look at what you have picked up. Some rocks, such as geodes, will have clues on the outside about what is inside, but you may need a glass to see them well. If you are lucky, you will be able to tell what you have without one, but why take the chance?

**8. SPRAY BOTTLE OF WATER AND A RAG.** Rocks are found in dirt, right? It really helps to have a spray bottle with you so you can clean a rock off a bit if you can't see for sure if it is something you want or not. Doing this can save you from carrying a lot of rock back that you won't want later.

**9. CONTAINERS OR WRAPPERS:** You will want to carry something to carry your finds in that will keep them from getting lost or broken. You can use old vitamin or aspirin bottles, old newspapers, paper towels, old socks, egg cartons. You can find specially designed specimen cases but to just carry your rocks out you can be creative as you want and use a number of items you already have in your home.

**10. COOKING OR CAMP GEAR.** If you are planning on eating or sleeping when you are in the rough, you will need the appropriate camp gear.

**11. EMERGENCY SUPPLIES.** This isn't just handy advice for rockhounds. Anyone who leaves home should have emergency supplies for the trip

with them. What supplies you need will vary depending on what kind of terrain you are going to be in. Basic needs for anywhere are: water, food, blankets, fire starter, medical, and utility (knife, twine, superglue, plastic, clean rags).

**12. MAPS, BOOKS, CHARTS.** You definitely will want these items. Some maps will mark rockhound areas and even though they may just mark the more generally known areas, they make great guides. Books you will want will include maps to sites, information about what areas you can find specific minerals in, and some information about minerals to help you identify them. Pictures are of much help for the beginner. If you can get a book with pictures of the minerals as they look in the wild before they are cut or polished.

There are many more types of equipment you can add to your starting cache as you develop your skill but this list is sufficient for the beginning rockhound. After you gain enough experience to begin looking for specific types of material, you will want to add equipment that will assist you to identify minerals or to collect specific minerals.

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## SAFETY IN THE FIELD

I can't stress too much or too often that it is imperative that you understand the environment that you are going into when going into the field. Nature does not always give second chances to those who are careless or ignorant of the conditions they are walking into. You must go prepared. Here is a list of things you must be aware of before setting out on your adventures.

### 1. Road Conditions.

You absolutely have to know what the roads are like where you are going. Some mountain passes can be treacherous in the best of weather – add a little rain or snow and you could be in real trouble trying to get through. Some mountain area roads will simply be closed down during snow. During summer months they can still be dangerous when wet, however. I know a road that leads to a great hot springs that is just fine when the weather is dry, but when it rains you can forget getting out of the canyon no matter what you are driving. Desert areas may have roads with "sinks" or soft spots that will trap your car if you drive into them. When planning a trip to an unknown area, it is wise to find out what road conditions in that area are like.

## **2. Forest or Brush Fires.**

**When walking into any area, any time, make sure you watch for good places of retreat or cover in case of fire. Once a fire starts it travels extremely fast and once you see it coming is not the time to start hunting for an exit or cover spot. Learn all you can about fire and how to survive one before taking trips into the field. You can survive a fire but it is a rare thing for people to survive by accident. Know what you are doing before you go.**

## **3. Natural Weather and Disaster Hazards.**

**Always find out what kind weather and natural disasters an area is prone to before going out. Are you in volcanic area and if so, is it active? Is it flash flood region? Are there electrical storms, high winds, or earthquakes? Once you find out what you might experience when in a particular area, check with the local weather service on your way out to see how likely it is you will experience something during your visit. When you get where you are going, make sure to look around to find a safe way to escape or cover from any adverse conditions. If you find out you are in a flash flood area be sure you see an escape route that can be used quickly. Just because everything is uphill from you in a flashflood area doesn't mean you are safe. If there are blockages to your passage upward you may not be able to climb fast enough to avoid trouble. You will need a clear path to be able to get out quickly. The rising water won't wait for you to climb over rocks and felled trees to get out of its way.**

## **4. Animals.**

**Watching the wildlife can be entertaining. Being injured or killed by wildlife is not. Know what dangerous animals live in any area you plan to visit and know how to avoid them or act when you run into them. While rattlesnakes are dangerous it is not particularly hard to avoid being bitten. Bears may be very cantankerous but most are easily avoided. The Department of Game and Wildlife can tell you about any animals in their local area and how to deal with them safely.**

## **5. Plants.**

**Poison ivy or poison oak can really put a damper on a good time. Some areas have plants that look like wild carrots but are extremely poisonous. Make sure when you are going out into the field that you**

**know what plants there are that can be irritants if they come in contact with your skin. Do not ever eat anything that you do not know for a fact what it is. Even Indians were known to have made mistakes about which plants were edible.**

## **6. Mining Areas.**

**Mining areas can be rich resources for treasure and minerals. They can also be death traps. When in mining areas make sure to watch out for shafts that might be covered by debris or drifted sand but not completely shurred. Never step in a hole even though it looks to have been filled in well. You may get a surprise fall of several hundred feet. Never walk into a tunnel either. Even if a tunnel seems safe, it can be full of dangers. Beams may be rotted or walls could easily crumble and cave in. Some tunnels have false bottoms that feel or look solid but give way when stepped on. Tunnels may also be full of Cyanide gas. You can't smell this gas but once you inhale it, it is deadly. Water around mining areas may also contain cyanide and other poisonous mining chemicals. Never drink water from a mining area.**

## **7. Health and First Aid.**

**Needless to say, if you are going out into the wilds, it is important you know something about first aid. Anything can happen out there. If you are allergic to bee stings, make sure to carry a sting kit with you. These are handy if you are going into snake country as well as the venom of a rattler is the same as that of a bee but hundreds of times stronger. Know what to do for deep cuts or bone breaks. Always travel with another person when it is possible and always tell a local forestry service where you will be and when you expect to leave. Know the areas you are going into as well and how to cope with illnesses that may arise due to the environment. If you are going into a desert it is important to know how to recognize heat stroke and what to do to avoid it or to treat it if you do get it. In mountainous areas you will need to know how to recognize altitude sickness and what to do in case you get hit with that. If you do not understand the different ways a particular terrain can affect you, don't go.**

## **8. Survival Techniques.**

**A last thing you need to think about is survival techniques in case of emergency. Make sure you take equipment that will help search and rescue teams or just passers-by find you in an emergency. Flashlights,**

**tin foil, or mirrors can save your life if you become trapped or lost. Make sure you have plenty of drinkable water, food, blankets, and fire starters with you when you travel. Car emergency gear such as flares, spare tires, jacks, ropes, and liquid patches can be pretty helpful to have with you as well. Think about what you might need in an emergency while packing to go somewhere. A shovel might not help you dig a car out of a sink hole in the desert, but it will help you dig a pit where you can cool yourself. Be creative but keep your gear as light as possible.**

**The more prepared you are to meet your environment when you go out, the more sure you can be of returning in one piece. Pioneers did a pretty good job of facing the elements. Life has become pretty cozy for us now with our modern conveniences and many forget that the great outdoors has not been completely remodeled as our homes have become.**

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## **REALITIES OF ROCKHOONDING**

**The previous sections of this report should have given your first clue about the realities of rockhounding. Going rockhounding is not like going to your local Mall and picking something out for yourself. You have to face the terrains and environments that your choice of hunted material comes from and sometimes that terrain can be pretty obnoxious. This is not always the case however. Two of my favorite places to hunt have been a pretty easy stroll around as long as I didn't try to hunt in the high noon sun in the middle of summer. It's just a quick breeze in, pick up what I want and breeze out. Nice.**

**Finding that spot took some work though, and that is a reality you have to deal with. Even when the spot is x'd out on a map, you still have to find the stuff when you get there and that isn't always easy – and sometimes it doesn't happen at all. If a rock and gem or treasure hunter told me they had never gotten skunked out hunting, I would not believe them for a minute. If you go out with great expectations and come home with nothing but dirty clothes and sore feet, keep heart. It happens to the best of us.**

**One thing that is really a shame is when new rockhounds are unable to find anything when they are, in fact, walking right over the very material they are hunting for without recognizing it. More seasoned rockhounds will get a kick out of watching the "newbie" pull that one. It's very easy to do, however, because rocks just don't always look out in the field like they do after they are taken home, washed up, or polished and slabbed.**



**You can study a thousand books and not see an agate when you are looking directly at it in the field. There is help though so don't be discouraged.**

**When starting your hobby, the first thing you want to do is go to museums or rock shops in the areas that you intend to hunt in. While the specimens on display will have been cleaned up a bit, many will have part of the matrix rock (that is, the rock that the gem material is found in) still attached to it so you can see what you are looking for. Many times you will find your specimens just from recognizing the rock they are found in. Just because a rock from one area is found in a particular matrix rock it does not mean that it will be found in the same rock in a different area either, so make sure to go to those museums or rock shops.**

**Another resource is a rock and gem club in the area that you plan to go to. Many of the people associated with these clubs will have local specimens on hand – sometimes even specimens that have not been cleaned yet. You will be able to see exactly what you are looking for, not just the polished and primed finished gemstone. These people may also be willing to give you some inside tips on finding them or even take you hunting themselves. Clubs often have field trips that you may attend to "get your feet wet". With the help of the seasoned club members on a field trip you will soon be more worried about how to carry your specimens back to your car instead of how and where to find them.**

**Paid digs are another great resource for the beginner (however they are great for the seasoned hunter who wants a particular material that is located at the fee dig, too). At the dig you will find many prime examples of what you are looking for and will have a coach there who will show you how to find the stones. That is how they make their money, so the more you find, the better it is for them.**

**Rockhound maps are a great help in finding general localities to hunt in, but do not expect to just drive up, get out of the car and start picking up great specimens. It can and does happen, but usually this isn't the case. Gems are usually found in pockets and you can walk around an area for quite awhile and never find much. Try stopping in a town near your chosen area and chatting with the locals about a spot on your map. They might be able to tell you where exactly to look once you reach the pinpointed area. If one of the local folk hadn't told me to look on the South West side of Antero above 12 thousand feet, I could have wandered around there for a week and never have spotted a thing – it's a big mountain. Haha. You might have to walk around town a bit to find**

**anyone who knows anything and will be a bit chatty about it, but it is time well worth spent if you do.**

**There are always people who will "know" all about it and then give you a bum lead as well. Oh well. Such is the life of a rockhound. You might want to get a second opinion of the whereabouts of any site you are told about if you can.**

**If all fails on one trip and you end up not finding anything, just remember how great it was to be out in the open and what kind of rock you did see that just wasn't doing much of anything so you can recognize it again next time and pass it by. You will want to learn from the failures as well as the successes when you can.**

**If you see a rock that you are not sure about and you are not too loaded down, take it with you to ask someone about later. It might be something worth having even though it isn't what you went to find. Learning to identify rocks comes with time and some you can never be completely sure about without using testing equipment and techniques.**

**You might need to do some studying outside the field, too. For instance, some volcanic areas have produced some excellent material while others have produced none. The difference is that below some volcanoes one of the plates will have slipped under the other and the friction has melted the material which later cools and hardens into great material. Knowing this, you might want to find out more about that particular volcano's history before you bother going there if you have no other leads about it. To find out about the likelihood of agate or opal it might help you to know if there was water in the area at one time in the past when the rocks were forming. You will also want to study books about rocks and look at pictures of them. You will want to learn about terminology about rocks such as Mohs scale, hardness, fracture, and so forth so you can learn to identify your finds. So while you will want to get out to look for specimens as often as possible, you will also want to spend time studying as well. The more you know, the easier a time you will have in the field and the better the odds are you can find specimens that are in sites not yet listed on the rockhounding maps.**

**Remember also that though you do need supplies, try to keep your pack as light as possible. If you aren't walking too far from your car most of your supplies can just be kept in the car. The further you are walking in, the more you must take with you. The more you carry in, the less room and strength you will have to take things out with you. While you will want to choose what you need to carry from the car with you, never be**

**tempted into not taking something you really need out there, such as your water, just to keep your load light. If you need it, you need it. Period. If you have to make two trips to go back for more specimens, consider yourself lucky to have found a great strike. Once you locate a great site you may be able to drop part of your supplies for the second trip back if it isn't as far as you had expected it to be.**

**While the idea of rockhounding can be quite romantic and exciting, the reality is that it takes some work to be a rockhound. Environments can be rough and studying the maps, talking to people, and learning the ropes can take some time and effort. Even for a cheap hobby with the modern prices of gas, it does take some money to pursue the hobby. How will you know if you are up to it all? Hahaha. You will know because you won't be able to leave it alone. Pure and simple. If you aren't happy if you aren't doing it, you are a rockhound.**

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## **WHAT TO SEARCH FOR**

**There is no real trick in deciding what to search for. Some areas will produce some types of gems and minerals and not others. If you want agates, it doesn't do much good looking in an area that only produces garnets and topaz. Deciding what to look for and where to look is just another matter of study. Talk to rock shops and rock club members. Check maps or rockhound books. There are plenty of resources that will guide you to where to look for what. As you learn and become more familiar with known areas and different types of rocks found there, you will become more able to figure out what you might find in areas that are not listed in the guides, or at least able to recognize what is there if you go to a new area. It all just comes with the learning.**

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## **WHERE TO SEARCH**

**Where to look when you get to a site is also partly a matter of experience and learning, but there are some tips that can help you get started. First of all you need to determine where you are going to go. Rock and gem hunting guide books, local rock and gem clubs and shops and museums can help you determine that. Local Chambers of Commerce often have information about their local areas that aren't always on the rockhound maps or in guide.**

**Once you get to a place you want to hunt you will need to determine where to start looking. If there is a stream in the area or a low spot, that is a good place to start. Material will roll or wash downhill into streams and gullies. Walking along these areas you will come to spots that you will find bits of material (if you are lucky you will find great specimens, too. When you come to a spot that you start finding material you will want to go uphill from there. Concentrations can often be found uphill from where some materials have washed down hill. Sometimes when you find material at streams and in rock bars the material can have been washed downstream quite a ways. If you start scanning the ground out a ways from the stream you will eventually come to places that have material scattered here and there around the ground, too. You will want to find these areas before climbing too far uphill. If all you are finding is in the stream itself and in stream bars, it's a good indication you are finding material that has washed downstream and need to go further before going uphill.**

**When hunting you can also follow ditches beside roads. You would not believe some of the specimens I have picked up right at the roadside. If you find good material in the ditches beside the road, it is a good indication that just walking around that area off the road will produce other finds.**

**Sometimes you will be searching for material that has a specific color, such as aquamarine. You can find material such as this by finding stones of that color then following the color up until you get to the source. This is the method I used to find aquamarine on Mt. Antero. There were spots where there were many blue rocks. I just followed the blue rock uphill.**

**When going uphill to sources, you might want to do some digging around the "upper" sides of bushes and boulders. These places trap rolling pebbles or crystals and can produce many specimens.**

**If you are hunting an area and find crystals or chips of a certain specimen around a large rock formation, you may want to dig in the area you are finding them. There might be much underground in that area. This is a great way to find crystals that are "peppered" through a large rock such as garnets usually are. By digging the dirt under the rock and sifting it in a screen you can pick out much material that is already loosened and fallen from the host rock without having to use tools to get specimens out of the host. It's just easier and quicker. Screens can be used to sift out crystals in streams, too. This is the easiest way to hunt garnets and sapphires out of streams. Many places that have water running through mineral areas will produce good gems from the water**

**that you can sift in a screen.**

**While you can't always control the weather, there is no doubt about it, it is much easier to find most material in bright sunlight as it will show up better even when dirty in the light. Some terrains might be a bit hot in sunlight so this is not always a plus, but you will find that after certain times of the day it can become much harder to spot a specimen if the sun isn't shining on it. That is not to say that if you get out on a cloudy day you won't find anything but with some experience, you will start to be very thankful for sunlight when out hunting.**

**If you have done some study and know what the host rock of the material you are searching looks like you have a bit of an advantage when you get to an area to hunt. The host material will always be more prominent than the material itself.**

**While these tips should get you going, there's nothing better than experience to be your guide in hunting for great gem material. The more you go, the more you'll know.**

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## **ABOUT MINES AND MINING AREAS**

**There is nothing quite like finding an abandoned mine site for the rock and treasure hunter. These areas, needless to say, are loaded with dangers, but when you go to a mine site with an awareness of the dangers, a clear head, and with common sense in full function, you can count on many hours of entertaining and, often, rewarding search.**

**Tailings and site areas can contain a wide variety of mineral and gem material. Because miners were basically interested in what they were mining for in particular, other materials were often overlooked and discarded in the tailings. Some of the nicest crystals I have ever found have come from mine tailings. I have also found tourmaline, garnet, sapphire and many other minerals.**

**What you can find will vary by area, but you can often pick up some of the mined materials as well. A caution about tailings is that they may contain the residue of mining chemicals, radiation, and sometimes, especially in gold mining areas, arsenic (arsenic is actually a metal found in rocks and can be very concentrated in gold mining areas).**

**Tailings are not the only areas you want to hunt when looking for gem**

**materials. Any small ravines under the mines will catch materials that roll downhill and are often ignored by hunters.**

**Any railroad track areas leading from mining areas are great places to hunt for the mineral mined in that area as rocks would tumble from trains in transport. If you can find a spot that a train has derailed and hunt downhill, you are bound to turn up quantities of mineral bearing rock on the mountainside. Library news archives are great places to find old news articles about such events, so you may want to do some research if you are planning your trip out in advance. It is a good idea to check with local Chambers of Commerce before heading out to the area. They can tell you about restricted hunting areas or sometimes will know of good areas not listed on maps.**

**They can also tell you if the rocks in that area contain any radioactivity before hunting in that area or use scanning devices when you get there if you have one. Uranium might be valuable but you really don't want to unwittingly wallow in it.**

**Artifacts are another great attraction in mining areas. It is not at all uncommon to find old coins, tools, and weapons in tailings and around the mining site. Sometimes you will get lucky and find mine camps with the remains of old buildings or miners cabins. Searching these areas can turn up all kinds of articles left or lost by miners. When hunting artifacts you want to check building walls and floors, fireplace walls, and to the right and left of outside of doors as many times these people buried or hid their belongings and caches in such spots. In cases of the owner's unexpected death, these items sometimes remain where they were hidden. Old buildings on or around mine sites can contain their own dangers, however. Many old miner's cabins and buildings have mine shafts in the buildings. Stepping on old boards that cover the shaft can be a rude and final awakening for the careless hunter. Any time you enter an old cabin, be very careful about where you step. Make sure the boards are solid and that you have footing that will allow you not fall through if a board should give out. Some of these shafts can run hundreds of feet straight down and don't allow much hope of survival if you should fall into them. If you see that a piece of flooring is noticeably different from the rest, or noticeably removable, do not step on it for any reason unless you can actually see that there is solid ground right underneath you. Never guess about this one as a wrong guess may be the last one you ever get.**

**Old mining areas will invariably contain one or more mining shafts or a tunnel. These need to be avoided at all costs. Never step on a board over**

**a mining hole. Even if a hole is filled in and looks solid, it can't safely be assumed to be safe. Sometimes enough debris will collect to make the hole look solid, but you may get a very rude surprise if you step down onto it. Tunnels hold many dangers and should not be explored no matter how safe they appear.**

**There is no way to smell cyanide gas, but you only have to inhale once for it to kill you. Many old gold tunnels are full of this gas. False bottoms, bottoms that appear solid but are not, or unstable tunnel walls, beams, and ceilings are another danger. Tunnels are enticing, but your best and safest bet is to keep your hunting to the outside of the tunnel. If you have children or pets with you when you explore near shafts and tunnels, you need to keep them under close supervision. I personally know people who can tell you what it feels like to lose a child in a mine shaft.**

**While old mining areas do hold many dangers, they also are interesting and productive places to gem and treasure hunt. With a little common sense and an awareness of the dangers of mining areas, a hunter can have a wonderful time exploring these historic sites.**

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## **ABOUT GOLD PANNING**

**Sure gold is "where you find it". Anyone even thinking about taking up prospecting has heard that one. It's probably the most frustrating answer any beginning prospector ever hears when asking where to look for gold. Where the heck exactly is "where you find it" located and why do people keep telling you that?**

**While that answer is a bit frustrating for the beginner there is a lot of truth in it. Gold can turn up in some pretty unusual places. Sometimes it has been sprinkled through areas by ancient glaciers or waterways. There are stories of people finding gold and thinking they had found a place to stake a claim, to discover later that they had only found the remnants of some unfortunate prospector's lost cache. Trains and carts being wrecked while hauling gold to smelters have spilled loads of ore which might be found later in the streams downhill.**

**While you might run into bits of gold scattered by such events, you might also appreciate a word of where you might be more statistically inclined to make an actual strike of some good concentrations of "color". It's really not as mysterious as it has been made to sound.**

**When you get to a gold bearing region you must choose a spot to hunt. Your main concern is that you are not hunting on someone else's property or claim. There are places you can still be shot for this, and some places where the claim owners take this right very seriously, so always make sure you know you are not "claim jumping" before you dig in.**

**The best place for the beginner to start is where you know that there are mines or claims uphill and upstream from your chosen location. Gold will wash downhill into a stream over time. If you can find a spot where a stream flowing downhill from known gold localities converges with the stream you are going to hunt, this is a terrific place to start.**

**Gold is heavy. It can be carried by a rapid current, but when the current slows down, the gold will drop to the creek bed. Start by hunting down stream from a converging creek or area of color uphill from you. Look for spots in the creek where fast moving water is impeded or slows down. The base of a small waterfall is always worth checking as are areas where the current is diverted by large rocks. Bends of the creek where water rushes in the middle but slows along the shore of the bend are another good area. Don't be afraid to be creative. I know a man that swept a year's living expense worth of gold from an old corrugated pipe that ran under a road where a creek passed through. The grooves of the pipe had served as a sluice to catch the grains and nuggets.**

**When panning, you will want to dig a bit rather than just scoop from the top dirt. You might find some traces of color just scooping the top of the creek bed, but because of its weight, gold will work its way down until it eventually hits something that prevents it from going any further. The smaller the grain or the more recently it has been dropped, the closer to the surface you might find it. The deeper you dig, the more you will find if you are searching a good area. Cracks and crevices in rock are also a great place to find grains of gold, but you may need special suction equipment to get it out. There are items you can buy very inexpensively that will help you do that.**

**Just as there are the right places to look for gold, there are also the right times of year. You will want to wait until late summer or early autumn which is when the streams are at their lowest and slowest. A good plan is to go look the creek over during its high season and take notes of the currents when the water is high. Returning later during the low season, you will already have an idea of good places to look for gold that has been spilled by the full spring currents.**



**Through practice you will soon become able to size up good spots on a creek to pan. When you take your cache and proudly show it off, if someone asks you where you got it, you can just smile and say "it was right where I found it".**

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## **ROCK AND GEM HUNTING FOR MONEY**

**While many rockhounds hunt just for the love of finding incredible items, many others turn their hobbies into cash. It is easier to make money from a rockhounding hobby than you might think.**

**Sometimes you can sell the gemstones you find just as they are. Many people will buy gemstones in the raw. In fact, there is a growing trend to buy raw agates with no polishing or cutting. You can also slab, polish, or carve some stones or make beads and cabochons with them. These are usual ways of working agate and jasper.**

**Crystals also can be sold in the raw or faceted and polished. Jewelry can be made easily to mount your gems into. You can get quite affordable equipment such as saws, polishers, grinders, and cabochon or bead makers to craft your rocks and gems, and most rock and gem clubs can help teach you to use them or tell you where you can go to learn to use equipment. Some clubs will even have equipment for members to use.**

**In the RHS1 shopping guide you will find a store called "Wire Sculpture". It is at:**



**This store has all the instructional guides you need to learn to make your own jewelry to sell.**

**So that's all fine and good, but where do you take your rocks, gems, and crafted items to sell? That is not a problem either. There are hundreds of places you can sell your items.**

**See the list below for just a few ideas about where you can sell your items.**

**WEBSITES:** If you have a website, you can sell your items from there. If not, you can sell them right on the RHS1 website.

**ROCK AND GEM SHOWS:** At shows you can sell what you want to sell and display prized finds that you just want to show off.

**STATE PARK GIFT SHOPS :** State Parks often buy local material to sell to tourists. If there is a state park near a location you got some great material, you will want to check it out.

**ROCK SHOPS:** They always need great material and sell both worked and raw stone. You don't need local material to sell it to a rock shop. In fact many shops even import material from all over the globe.

**MUSEUMS:** If the piece is local and spectacular, a local museum might be interested in it.

**GIFT SHOPS:** Many gift shops will purchase unique items for their visitors.

**GARAGE SALES:** I have seen a few garage sales which feature gemstones, artifacts, and fossils. You can even get together with others and make your own rock and gem sale right in your own driveway.

**LOCAL MOTELS:** Sometimes local motels will have some items for sale and will be glad to display your items for sale – especially if they are local. Tourists want to see local items and will buy just about anything as a souvenir of where they have been.

**JEWELRY SHOPS:** If what you are finding is gem quality material, or if you have made some spectacular jewelry, you might be able to sell it to a local shop.

These are just a few ideas for turning rocks and gems into cash. You can probably find many more places around your own local area to sell your items whether they are in the raw or crafted.

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## WHAT ABOUT FOSSILS, TREASURE, OR ARTIFACTS?

What you will find will not always fit into these categories, however. Many people will hunt fossils, artifacts, and treasure as well. These items will all have many more considerations than the average rock and gem as they are protected by collecting laws.

Whenever you are hunting for anything (yes even rocks and gems) you

**need to check the laws of the area you are hunting in before collecting. In the United States it is illegal to collect vertebrate fossils. Treasure such as old coins or sunken ships and meteors also have many laws attached. First you need to know the laws about what you are digging up and where you are hunting for it. Then you can do some research into what to do if you find something that is not legal for you to keep.**

**Sometimes laws will pertain only to public land, which means if you have permission to hunt on private property you may keep the object or sell it at will. This rule applies to meteors in most areas. It is not surprising that most meteors are "found on private property". In some areas you are not even allowed to pick up an artifact or a fossil. This does not mean that you can't make money from these items. Talk to local authorities, universities, and museums. You may be able to make arrangements to receive pay for finding items whether you can keep them or not. Just remember that if you move the item before finding out where you can take it or what the law says you can do with it, you risk fines instead of payment for your discovery.**

**As an example, if you are going to be hunting in an area where a particular Indian tribe used to live, you may go to their reservation and talk to an authority there. They may be willing to pay you for artifacts made by their ancestors. Many tribes are very conscious about their heritage and would much rather have their artifacts than see them taken by the government.**

**Good finds, no matter what they are can often lead to cash value. Whatever it is you are hunting for, it is best to find out the laws for hunting before hunting – BUT – talk to universities and museums before government officials about getting paid for finding items. The government may just take your items with no compensation, while other entities may be more willing to pay and have legal rights to collect your finds.**

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## **A LAST WORD ABOUT HUNTING – THE HUNTERS CODE OF ETHICS**

**In this day and age when our rights to hunt are in constant jeopardy, it is more important than ever that hunters follow a strict code of ethics when hunting. Many lands have already been restricted. Some are open only because local rock and gem clubs have made agreements to maintain the land themselves. This means picking up trash and helping**

**to keep foliage healthy or filling in holes left behind by hunters.**

**When you go out hunting it is extremely important that you get permission to hunt on private lands before doing so, fill in holes you dig, pack your trash out with you, and leave the foliage undamaged, and do whatever else you can to keep the area intact and damage free. Too many problems in an area will result in that site becoming restricted to hunting. No one wants to see someone acting in a manner that will get their favorite sites shut off to them.**

**I am publishing the AFMS (American Federation of Mineral Societies) code here for all to see and adopt as their own code of action for the benefit of themselves and all others who share this planet. And I am also extending my sincerest thank-you to the AFMS for their diligence in working with the Government to find ways to protect our rights to enjoy the land while at the same time working to keep our environment healthy.**

**If you are going to be a rockhound, you need to learn these rules and follow them at all times. If you break these rules, do not be surprised if someone reports you. None of us want to lose our rights because of someone who does not respect the right of others to enjoy their collecting hobbies.**

## **THE CODE OF ETHICS**

- I will respect both private and public property and will do no collecting on privately owned land without permission from the owner.**
- I will keep informed on all laws, regulations or rules governing collecting on public lands and will observe them.**
- I will, to the best of my ability, ascertain the boundary lines of property on which I plan to collect.**
- I will use no firearms or blasting material in collecting areas.**
- I will cause no willful damage to property of any kind such as fences, signs, buildings, etc.**
- I will leave all gates as found.**
- I will build fires only in designated or safe places and will be certain they are completely extinguished before leaving the area.**

- **I will discard no burning material - matches, cigarettes, etc.**
- **I will fill all excavation holes which may be dangerous to livestock.**
- **I will not contaminate wells, creeks, or other water supplies.**
- **I will cause no willful damage to collecting material and will take home only what I can reasonably use.**
- **I will practice conservation and undertake to utilize fully and well the materials I have collected and will recycle my surplus for the pleasure and benefit of others.**
- **I will support the rockhound project H.E.L.P. (Help Eliminate Litter Please) and will leave all collecting areas devoid of litter, regardless of how found.**
- **I will cooperate with field-trip leaders and those in designated authority in all collecting areas.**
- **I will report to my club or federation officers, Bureau of Land Management or other authorities, any deposit of petrified wood or other materials on public lands which should be protected for the enjoyment of future generations for public educational and scientific purposes.**
- **I will appreciate and protect our heritage of natural resources.**
- **I will observe the "Golden Rule", will use Good Outdoor Manners and will at all times conduct myself in a manner which will add to the stature and Public Image of Rockhounds everywhere.**

**So now you know the basics and how to go about pursuing the hobby of rock and gem hunting. Be sure to come back and get our next report which will be available soon. If you have questions or need help, you can write to us as easy as clicking on the "Contact US" tab on our site. Of course you will probably want to sign up as a member so you can post your questions, successes, pictures, and items for sale any time you want to.**

**Hope to see you there.**

**Keep on Rockin' the Third Rock**

**Sal**

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## **RESOURCES FOR ROCKHOUND SUPPLIES**

**Rockhound Station 1 Pro Shop.  
Top class professional equipment for rockhounds and  
treasure hunters.**

**Check out the Sections... Click Below**

- Field Equipment**
- GPS and Navigation**
- Lapidary and Jewelry Equip.**
- Mineral Identification**
- Prospecting**
- Treasure Hunting**

**METAL DETECTORS ROCK PICKS – SAND SCOOPS**



**INSTRUCTIONAL BOOKS AND GUIDES FOR ROCKHOUNDS,  
TREASURE HUNTERS – GEOLOGY, PALEONTOLOGY  
–(you name it, it's here – even if you just want a good piece of  
fiction.**

**Best selection of books on any subject a rockhound could ask  
for.**



**GOLD AND TREASURE HUNTING INSTRUCTIONAL BOOKS**

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**ROCK AND GEM, LAPIDARY, and other MAGAZINES  
(best price on Rock and Gem Magazine you will find  
anywhere).**

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**AUTOMATIC GOLD PANNING MACHINE**

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**MISCELLANEOUS OUTDOOR AND TRAVEL SUPPLY,  
GPS DVD'S AND MORE FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

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**ROCK TUMBLERS**

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**JEWELRY SUPPLIES, TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL BOOKS**

[CLICK HERE](#)

**CAMPING EQUIPMENT, GPS, ETC.**

[CLICK HERE](#)

**OUTDOOR GEAR FOR YOUR DOG**

[CLICK HERE](#)

**TRAVEL – airfare, hotels, etc.**

[CLICK HERE](#)

## RHS1 WORLD FORUM



### **RHS1,s Resident Expert...**



**If you need advice, or you are not sure what to buy...Then  
have a word with Jack.**

**This is where Jack Cole (alias Lapidary Rough) can be reached if you  
have questions about rocks, gems, lapidary, fossils, or artifacts. Be sure  
and stop by now and again because Jack likes to just teach sometimes  
and you never know what he's going to want to teach us!**

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