



## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SRI LANKA

Sri Lankan sapphires are found in the central, southern, and eastern districts of the island nation, situated just off the southern tip of India.

**Environment** • Local gem miners rely on traditional mining practices that have been employed in Sri Lanka for 2,000 years without environmental damage. Sri Lanka's alluvial deposits of sapphires promote small scale mining that disturbs little land. Mining is generally confined to marshy terrain, paddy lands, and riverbeds and is conducted by independent miners who operate in collectives. Many miners operate seasonally. Governmental oversight of gem mining in Sri Lanka ensures that only low-impact mining practices are employed and requires that any new projects undergo a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment. Discussions are ongoing to make progress on remaining environmental issues, such as standing water in open mine areas that exacerbates disease spread through mosquito populations.

**Labor** • Sri Lanka's sapphire miners operate in cooperatives known as *karahaula* that rely on traditional mining methods. These small groups of artisanal miners share the costs, labor, and profits from the sale of any gemstones found. Each group is managed by a mine owner who provides food and lodging and pays a weekly allowance to each team member. Each worker holds a share of the mine by contributing his labor and is entitled to a percentage of profits from the sale of found gems. The Mines and Minerals act of 1992 prohibits any person under the age of 18 from participating in gemstone mining in Sri Lanka.



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