

LAMBINA

Lambina opal field, 100 km south of the Northern Territory border and 90 km northeast of Mintabie, is Australia's most recently worked source of precious opal. Although worked for at least 30 years, it has only been in the last decade that production has become significant. Probably discovered in the 1930s, it was visited and worked intermittently in the 1950s, 1964 and 1978, and then worked seriously from 1989 to the mid-1990s. Lambina became more accessible to opal mining in 1998 following the signing of a native title agreement with the Antakirinja and Yunkuntjatjara people.

Opal at Lambina is associated with weathered sediments of the Great Artesian Basin, and is hosted mainly in rocks of Cretaceous age. It is hard by opal standards, and occurs as seams and infilling cracks around nodules, and by filling moulds or replacing fossils; opalised sandstone also occurs. The high-quality gems include white (light) and crystal opal displaying a good play of colour. Up to 50% of Lambina

opal does not fluoresce under long-wave ultraviolet light. However, much of the opal is covered by clay and soil, which tends to dull the fluorescence.

