Renowned Tiffany Diamond now on view at
Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History

The world-famous Tiffany Diamond makes its first-ever appearance in Washington at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. The loan of the diamond celebrates a $1.1 million gift from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation. Also on view for the first time are two rare gemstones that were purchased for the National Gem Collection through an endowment created by The Tiffany & Co. Foundation gift. The Tiffany Diamond will remain on view until Sept. 23.

“The Smithsonian is honored to host the spectacular Tiffany Diamond and grateful for the generosity of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation’s endowment to the Natural History Museum,” said Cristián Samper, Acting Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. “Through this endowment the National Gem Collection’s position as the world’s preeminent collection of fine gemstones will continue to be enhanced for generations to come.”

The Tiffany Diamond is one of the largest fancy yellow diamonds ever discovered. It weighed 287.42 carats in the rough when it was discovered in 1877 in South Africa. Tiffany & Co., the famous Fifth Avenue jewelry firm, purchased the stone and aptly named it. The diamond was cut into a cushion shape of 128.54 carats with 82 facets - 24 more than what is traditionally done - to maximize brilliance. It now appears in the “Bird on a Rock” setting, designed in the early 1960s by Jean Schlumberger. The “bird” is gold and platinum with white and yellow diamonds accented by a ruby eye.

“The Tiffany Diamond is one of the world’s most famous diamonds and company ambassadors. We’re pleased to have it on view at the Smithsonian to celebrate the partnership between The Tiffany & Co. Foundation and the Natural History Museum,” said Fernanda Kellogg, president of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation.

In June 2006, the museum received a $1.1 million gift from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation to establish a collection in its name as part of the museum’s National Gem
Collection. The gift established an endowment for the acquisition of important gemstones for the collection to be known as “The Tiffany & Co. Foundation Collection.” The gift also made possible the creation of the exhibition case to display these and other important gemstones in the National Gem Collection Gallery.

Also on exhibit will be a rare purple 40.1-carat elbaite (a member of the tourmaline family) and a 15.93-carat garnet, exceptional because of its large size and rich green color. Both gemstones were purchased with funds from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation Endowment.

The gems and minerals halls of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History are among the most visited museum galleries in the world, attracting more than 5 million visitors every year. The National Gem Collection, created in 1884, is recognized for its breadth of world-class precious gemstones, including the Hope Diamond, the most popular museum object in the world.

“The endowment from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation provides a tremendous opportunity for the Smithsonian to acquire gemstones from newly discovered sources and to enhance the National Gem Collection,” said Jeffrey Post, curator of the Smithsonian’s National Gem Collection.

The Tiffany & Co. Foundation is the grant-making entity of the internationally known jeweler Tiffany & Co., which was founded in 1837. The company and the foundation have been active supporters of the Smithsonian and the National Museum of Natural History and its National Gem Collection since 1983. The company supported the restoration of the Geology, Gem and Mineral Hall in 1988, and it donated a kunzite necklace, designed by Paloma Picasso, to the National Gem Collection in 1990.

The National Gem Collection is part of the Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals at the National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W., in Washington, D.C. Opened in 1910, the museum is dedicated to maintaining and preserving the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. It also fosters critical scientific research as well as educational programs and exhibitions that present the work of its scientists and curators to the public. It is the most visited natural history museum in the world. The museum’s Web site is www.mnh.si.edu.

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