

Mineral Spotlight: Calcite

This is a calcium carbonate mineral which is also the polymorph of aragonite. Crystals of calcite occur in a variety of shapes and forms ranging from massive aggregates, prismatic crystals, stalactites, rhombohedrons, pulverulent, saccharoidal, oolitic, dogtooth spars and even euhedral crystals. The colors are also variable. A majority of calcite samples will show fluorescence under an ultraviolet light, and will easily fizz with acid.

Calcite also has an optical property known as birefringence—which is the double refraction of light in a transparent material. It is also a limestone mineral and forms in sedimentary environments where there is chemical precipitation through evaporation of solutions rich in calcium bicarbonate ions or through extraction by marine organisms. Finding calcite in igneous environments is rare but not impossible as it is also present in magma. This mineral is used in building cement, in metallurgy as a flux and as a fertilizer in soils.

This feature was posted on Dice Museum social media by Museum docent Gregory Ian Oduor on 6/25/2021.

