

REMINISCENCE OF LUKHUMI

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Fig. 1. The way to Lukhumi Mine.

The extraordinary uplands of Western Georgia have always attracted me to the Grand Caucasus: its exotic beauty, the sound of the Georgian language, and the customs and lifestyle of its inhabitants. So in August 1975, when visiting Dashkesan, Azerbaijan, a safe choice as to mineralogical trophies, I decided to make a detour into the Grand Caucasus, to the Lukhumi Arsenic Deposit (42°47'33"N, 43°19'6"E) in an offshoot of the Lechkhumi Range, at the Lukhunistskali River headwaters, Georgia. That was my first trip to Lukhumi. Since then, the site has attracted me time and again.

The route started at Kutaisi, a large Georgian city (Fig. 1). Once leaving the maze of streets, the small bus drove along the right side of the Rioni River, past the mighty outcrops of folded rocks on the opposite bank, to the town of Ambrolauri. There you could try to catch a regular local bus and reach, in an hour, the village of Uravi where the Racha Chemical Plant, which consumed the production from Lukhumi, was located. A super pure manufacturer it was, by the way: a water sprinkler drove by the streets every half hour to damp down the dust. From here was the way to the Lukhumi Mine, about thirty kilometers by the road up the Lukhunistskali River, the Rioni right tributary. However, this could not happen earlier than the next day, and so Rezo, our old friend, welcomes us with his open arms and amicable table. There is no sense in describing Georgian hospitality with its hearty meals, table talk and drinking-songs: if you have been lucky enough to experience it, you know what I



Photo 1. Upper Racha

Who's Who

KRISTALLE
Est. 1971

**WORLD LEADERS
IN FINE MINERALS**

**Crystal
CLASSICS**



Kristalle. Kristalle was founded in 1971 by Wayne and Dona Leicht and has gained a worldwide reputation for offering the finest quality gold specimens and minerals. Gold specimens from California are what brought Kristalle to the attention of the world, and no other dealer in the history of collecting has offered the numbers or quality of specimens that are obtainable at Kristalle. We are delighted that many museums from around the world consistently come to Kristalle to acquire specimens for their collection, and we can count amongst our customers numerous prominent collectors.

Located in a landmark cottage in Laguna Beach, California, USA, just south of Los Angeles, Kristalle operates one of the finest galleries of Natural History items for sale. The gallery has thousands of specimens on display to interest the beginning collector to the advanced. Recent renovation has created a quaint and comfortable surroundings in which visitors can spend time browsing the inventory; and the gallery now includes its own 'Cabinet of Curiosities'. The Kristalle gallery is open 'by appointment' on weekdays, as well as Saturday and Sunday.

Crystal Classics. Crystal Classics is one of the best known sources for fine and rare mineral specimens worldwide. Our highly skilled team of mineralogists travels the world to bring the best of new finds from working mines and also the finest classic minerals from old collections. We supply the world's top private collectors and Natural History Museums with the best specimens that come to the market.

Crystal Classics' purpose-built offices are based in the beautiful county of Somerset in Southern England (about 3 hours drive southwest of London) in the ancient village of East Coker. We have a very extensive selection of minerals for viewing at our showrooms, and a state of the art mineral preparation (trimming and cleaning) laboratory. Our selection of fine minerals is certainly the largest in Europe. Please visit us in East Coker at our showrooms, open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

What we do. Kristalle and Crystal Classics have worked together in partnership for over five years. Together we have a client base of thousands worldwide and are known to always have the finest and rarest specimens available. Some of our international Museum customers include: The Natural History Museum in London, England; The Sorbonne Museum in Paris, France; The Musée d'his-

Ian, Dona and Wayne.



Wayne and Ian on location in Venezuela.

