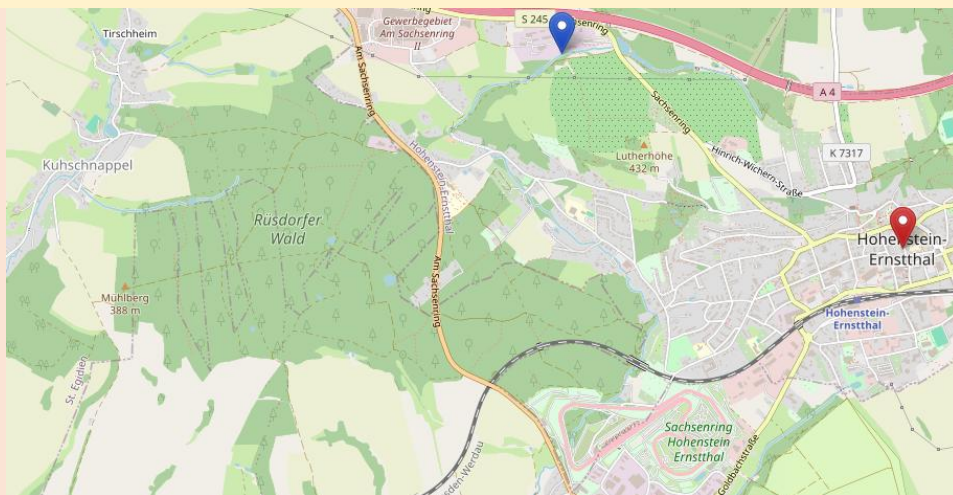


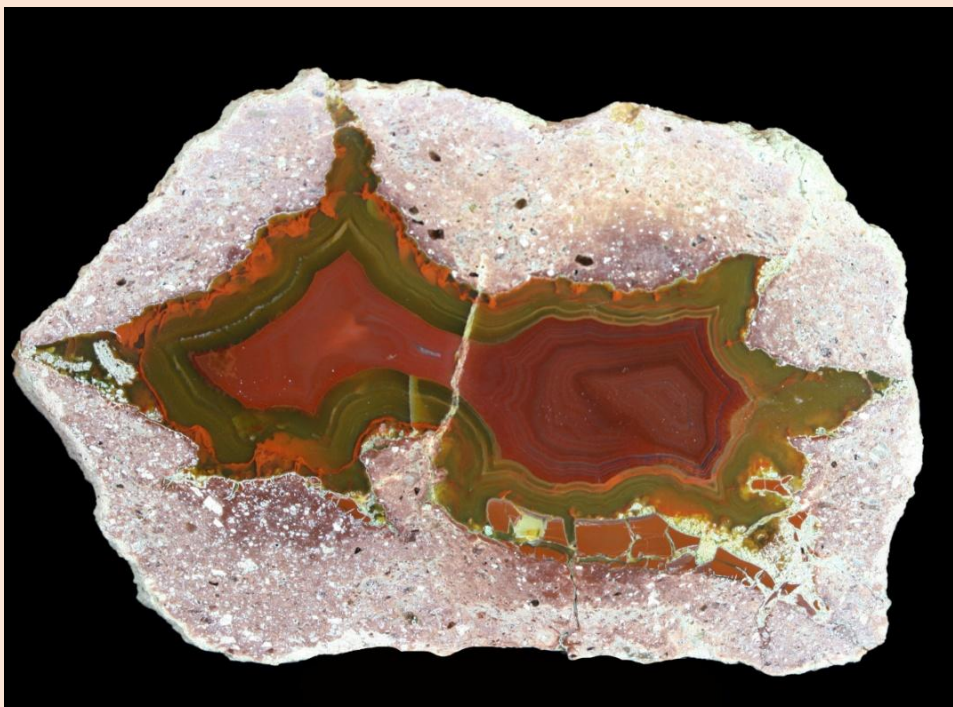
Agates from „Heiterer Blick“, Hohenstein-Ernstthal, Saxony, Germany

- a report by Andreas Händel, Ketzin, Germany

This agate site, well known among German collectors, was named after a former inn near Hohenstein-Ernstthal. However, it is located in the middle of the Rüsdorf Forest and marks the northernmost extent of an area of rhyolitic rocks in the Rotliegend formation of the Ore Mountains basin, which extends as far as Sankt Egidien and beyond. The sought-after agate nodules are found in porphyry layers, always within a brown ignimbrite—a volcanic tuff that, after weathering, appears as loam or clay.



© OpenStreetMap-Mitwirkende



Agate with double chamber. 10.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.

For more than 50 years...

There were many sites here in the 1970s through the 1990s, often yielding rich finds. However, we always split open the specimens back then—the geodes rarely contained agate inclusions, but instead contained quartz, jasper, or no inclusions at all, especially those with a lens-shaped or “UFO-shaped” form.

The most well-known sites are those yielding relatively large, perfectly round geodes with numerous thin veins, which almost always contain the coveted “atoll agates” (a narrow, semicircular agate system that lies like an atoll over a round agate cell). However, for discerning collectors, there are usually only a few specimens worth collecting.

These geodes were found in large quantities by local collectors in January 2007, after Storm Kyrill, beneath the trunks of fallen spruce trees. This suggests that finds could be made throughout the entire forest area.

At one site, only the remains of former geodes were found in 1987—star-shaped agate cores, mostly only 3–5 cm in size—but some of these contain very beautiful agates. This layer also contained large quantities of fragments of pure agate in magnificent colors, which are very well suited for jewelry making.

The best finds were made in the 1980s and 1990s, when people were still allowed to officially dig with the forest ranger’s permission—on the condition, which we serious collectors took for granted back then, that the site be properly backfilled and leveled, and that we not dig near large trees.



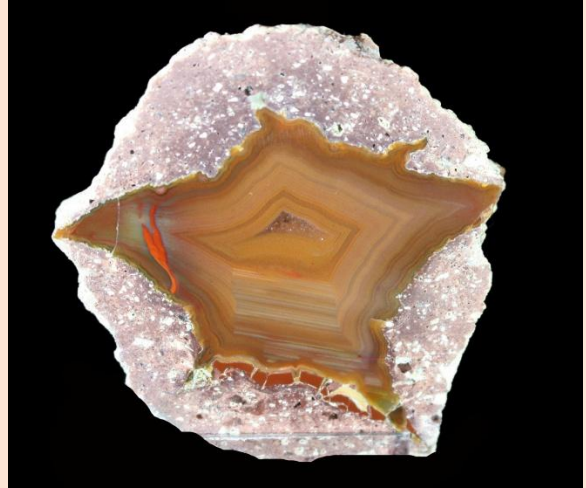
The Quarry. Andreas Händel photo.



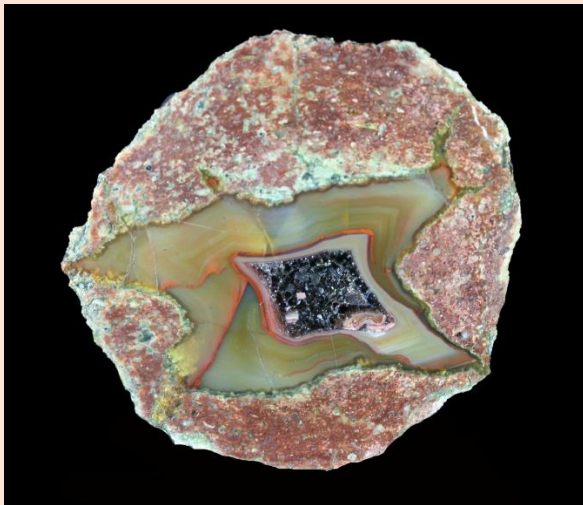
Agate cores. Andreas Händel photo.



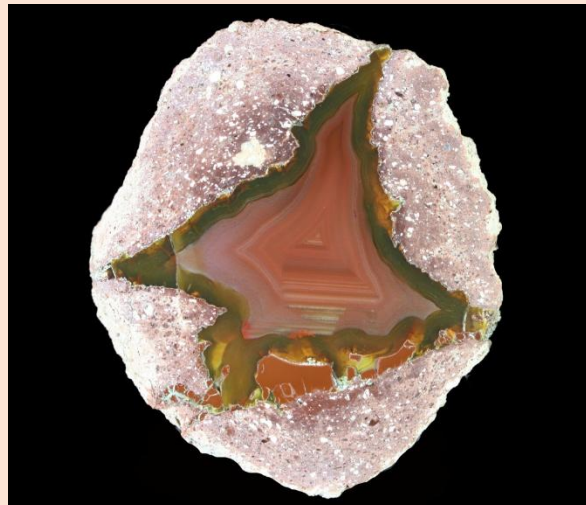
4.7 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



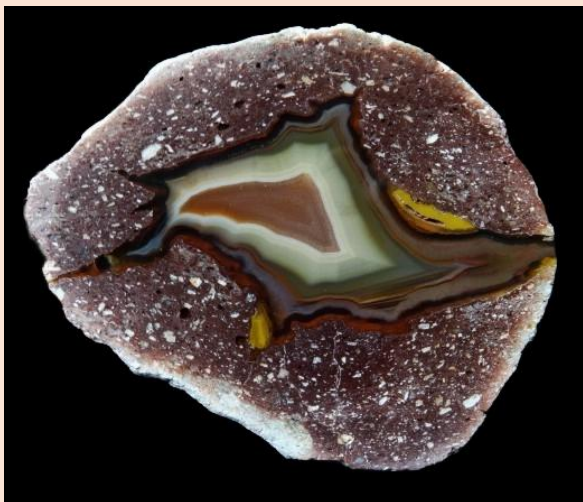
5.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



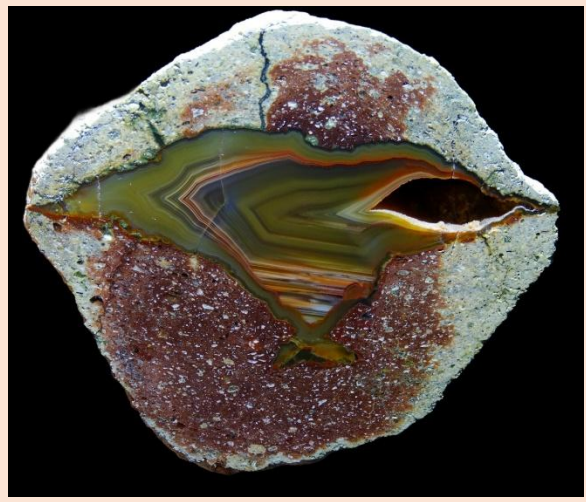
6 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



6 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



6.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection and photo.



8.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection and photo.

After 1990, the forest was so badly damaged by irresponsible, profit-driven individuals that a complete ban on collecting has been in effect ever since, and the forest area was designated a nature reserve.

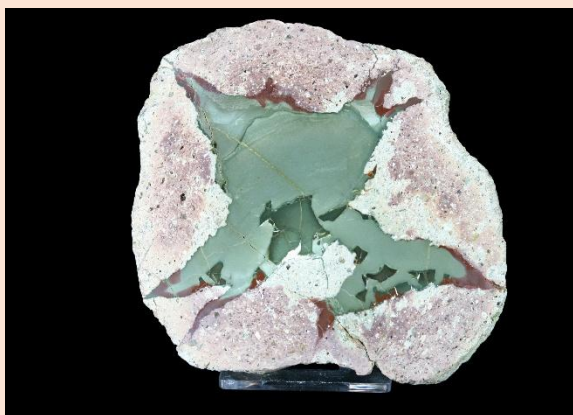
Surprisingly, new opportunities for discoveries arose when, starting around 2010, an old quarry—used to extract gravel for reinforcing forest roads—was reopened directly below the main site. During this work, the agate-bearing layers on a slope were also exposed. Once the work was completed, some wonderful finds were made here—after all, there was no harm done.

Once again, we encountered this tough, flat rock here—presumably a type of green jasper—interspersed with numerous oval or round geodes, some of them quite large; however, all of them contained only green jasper, which is not worth polishing. That said, some of the smaller geodes have an ideal star-shaped filling and are part of a local collection.

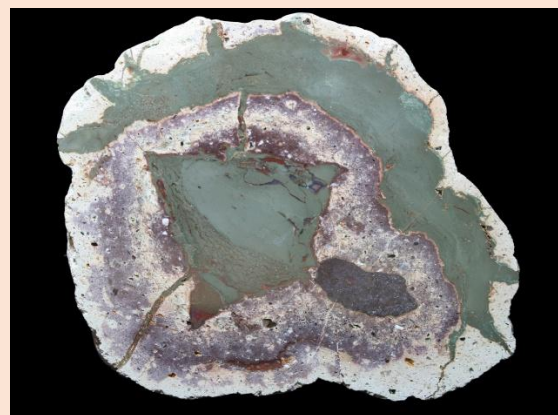
Things got interesting between the jasper layers: here, layers and veins of clay run through the rock, appearing in various colors, with layers of different colors often lying side by side and on top of one another. It was here that the coveted spheres were found, though their fillings vary greatly depending on the color of the clay. There were dark brown layers; here, the nodules are mostly filled with porous “fragments.” In yellow and white layers—often white kaolin—the nodules are lens-shaped and usually contain only crystalline, white quartz.

Back then, after a grueling day of digging, you’d brought home a big “haul” only to be sorely disappointed when you cut it open!

The best agates were found in light red, loose layers of clay; here, the geodes were plentiful but mostly confined to specific areas. They are relatively round, usually between 8 and 10 cm in size, and feature distinct “veins.” Finding one was like hitting the jackpot—you could literally get swept up in a gold rush, or rather, an “agate rush”!



Jasper. 9.5 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



Jasper. 9 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



Thundereggs, just recovered. Andreas Händel photo.



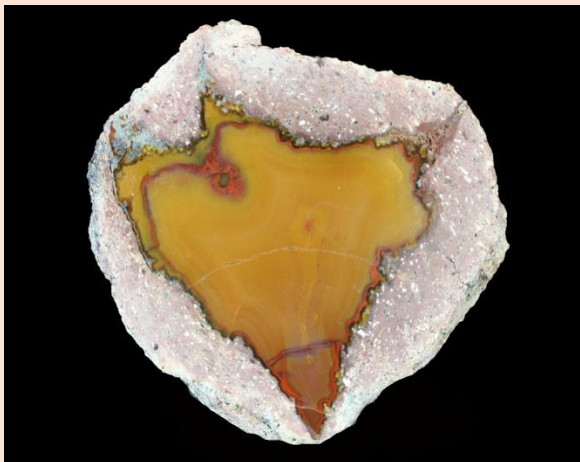
A promising „haul“ of agate thundereggs. Andreas Händel photo.



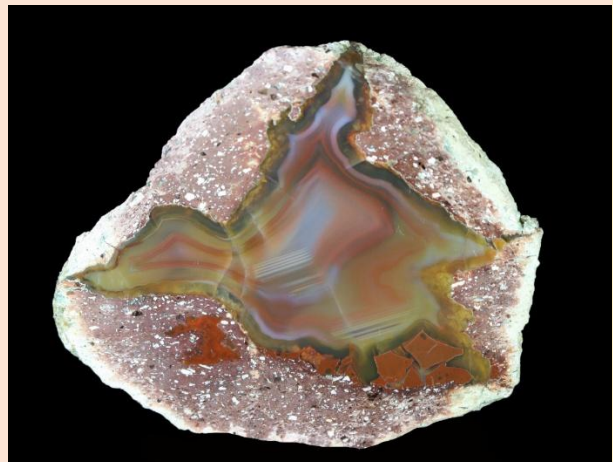
10.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



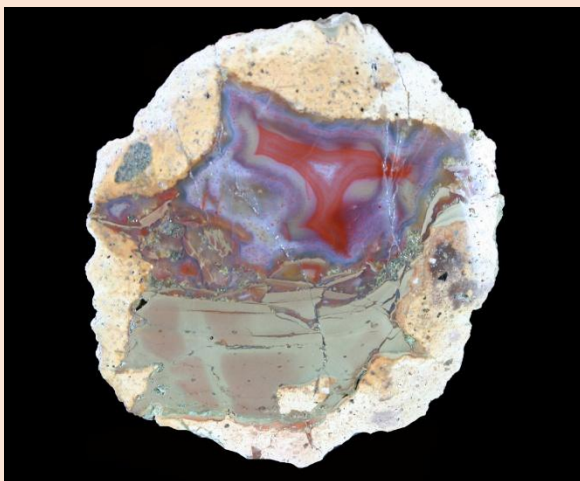
7.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



6.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



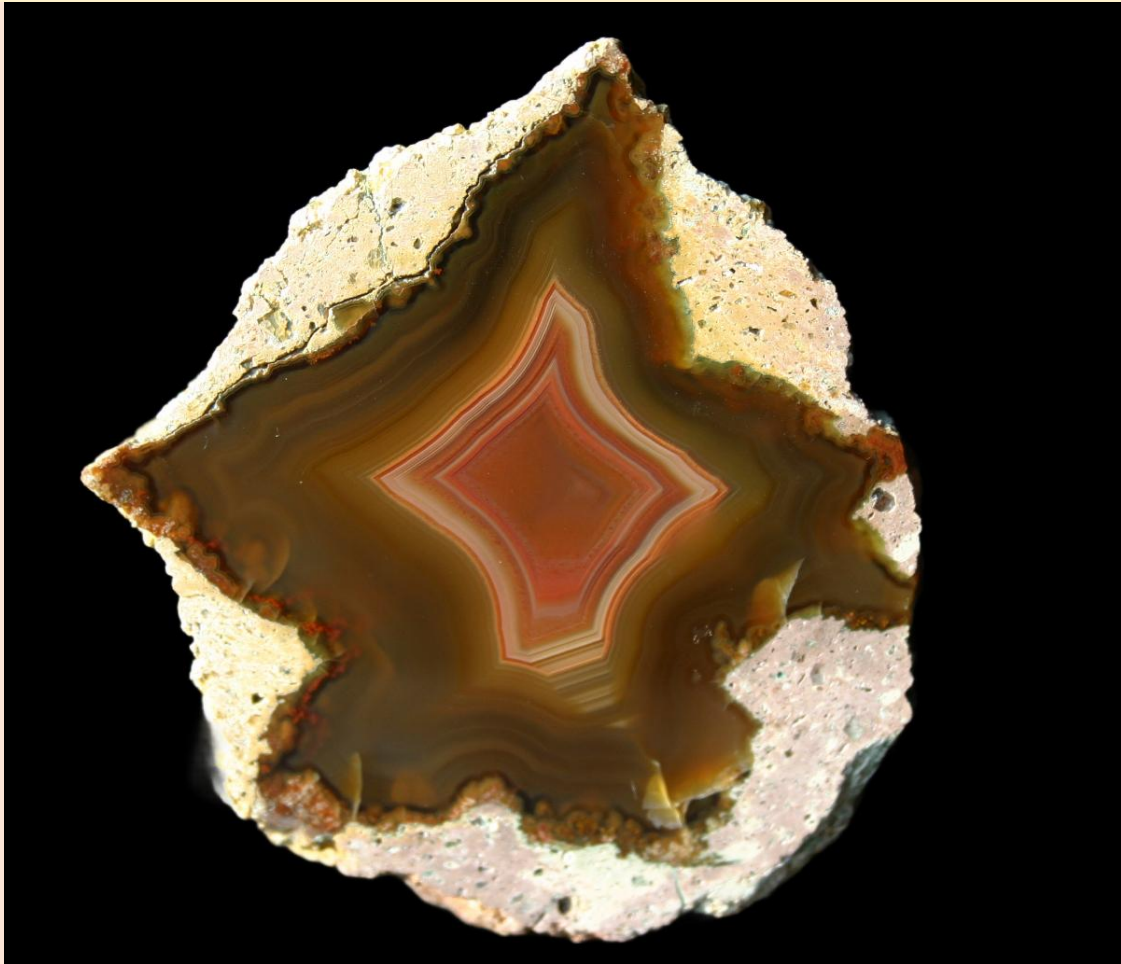
7.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



7 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



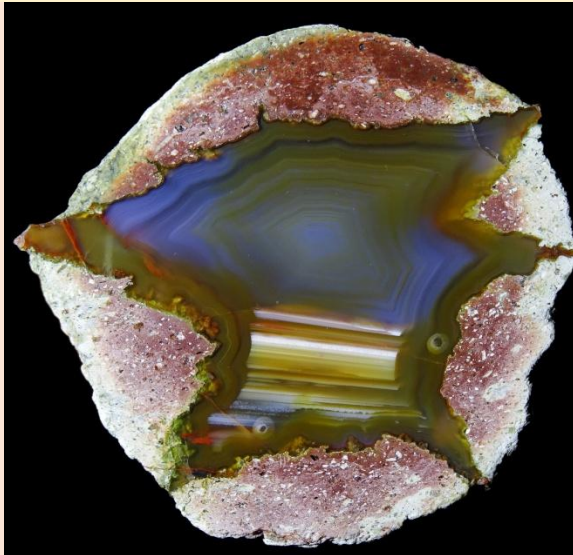
6.6 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



6.2 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



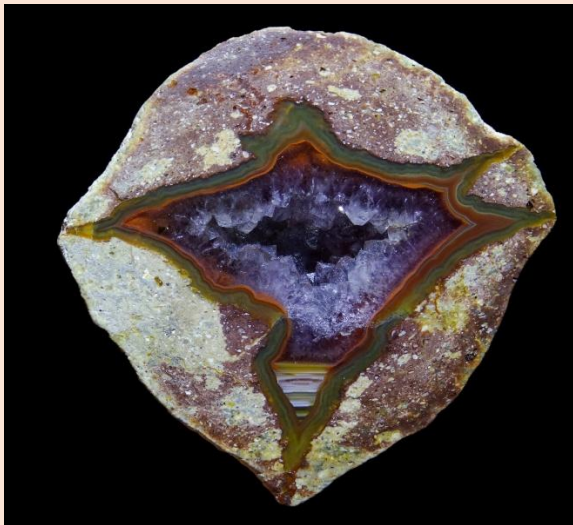
„Face“. 10.4 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



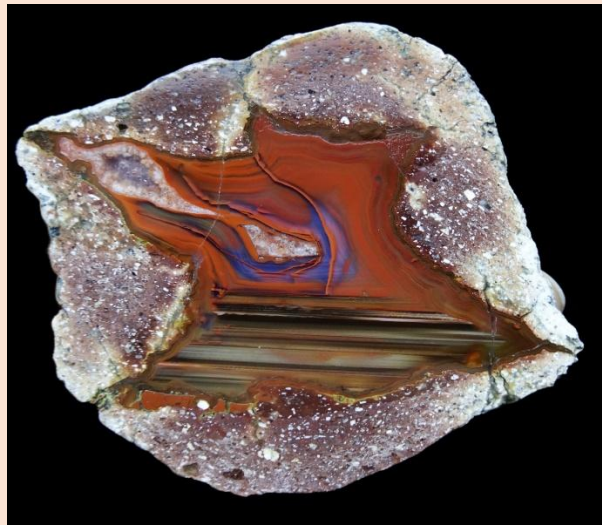
6.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



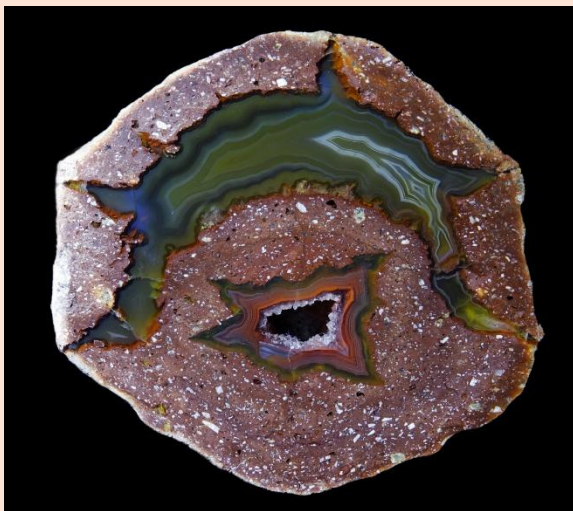
7.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



8 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



8 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



„Atoll agate“. 9 cm.
Peter Wagler collection & photo.



9 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.

Typical patterns and colors

The agates differ significantly from those found at Sankt Egidien, which is only about 20 km away. The ignimbrite in the Rüsdorf Forest is generally darker and contains larger feldspar inclusions.

The main colors of the agates are yellow/honey-colored, as well as greenish-yellow and often transparent, though reddish, green, and blue hues also occur. Beautiful parallel banding (gravitational, "onyx" banding) in various colors is frequently observed. Feather and moss structures, as well as druses containing amethyst and smoky quartz, are rare but beautiful. Many specimens typically feature green and red jasper fragments that "float" in the lower part of the sphere's interior. Some geodes also contain agate and, in many cases, jasper that can be polished; these pieces can be described as jasp-agate. The "atoll agates" typical of Hohenstein are also found here, often two-toned, with a differently colored center.

In contrast, the numerous iron and manganese particles typical of Sankt Egidien are found only very rarely in the individual layers.

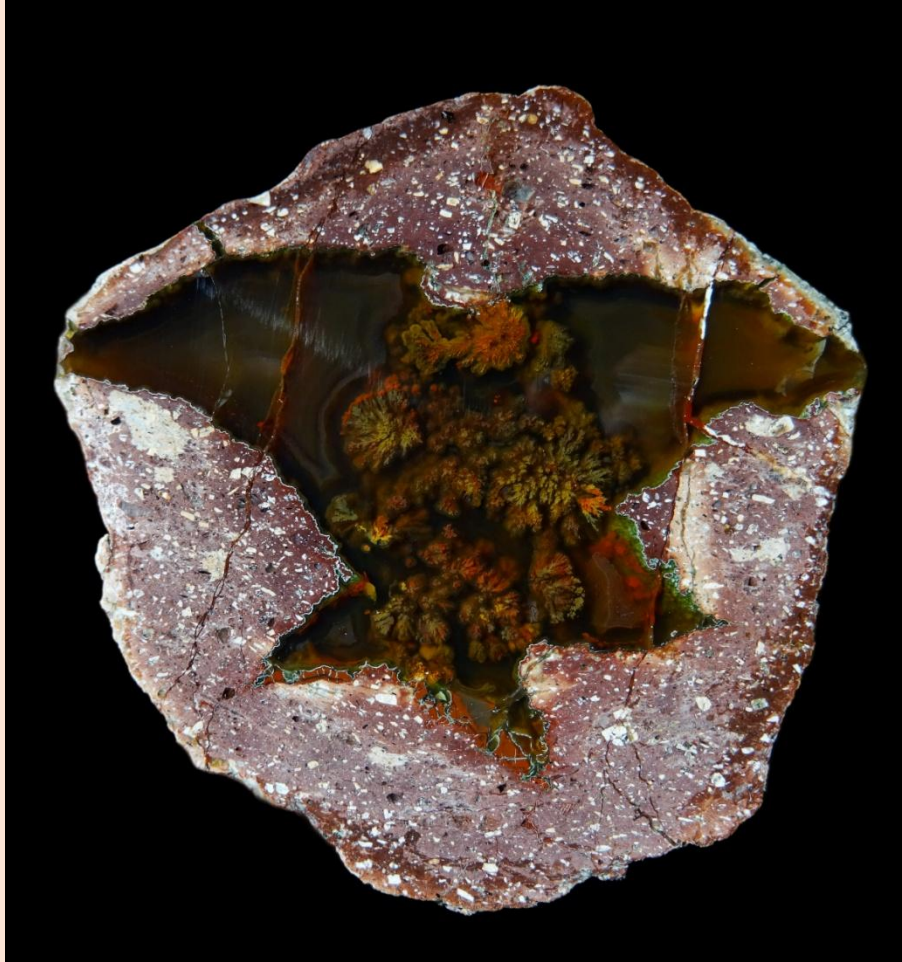
For scientists studying the still not fully understood origins of agates, this site could be very interesting!

Currently, there are officially no longer any opportunities to find specimens there, as the wooded area is privately owned. Several requests by a group of collectors to the relevant forestry authority for a prospecting permit in the quarry have so far been denied for various reasons. It is also highly doubtful whether there are still any opportunities to find specimens there today.

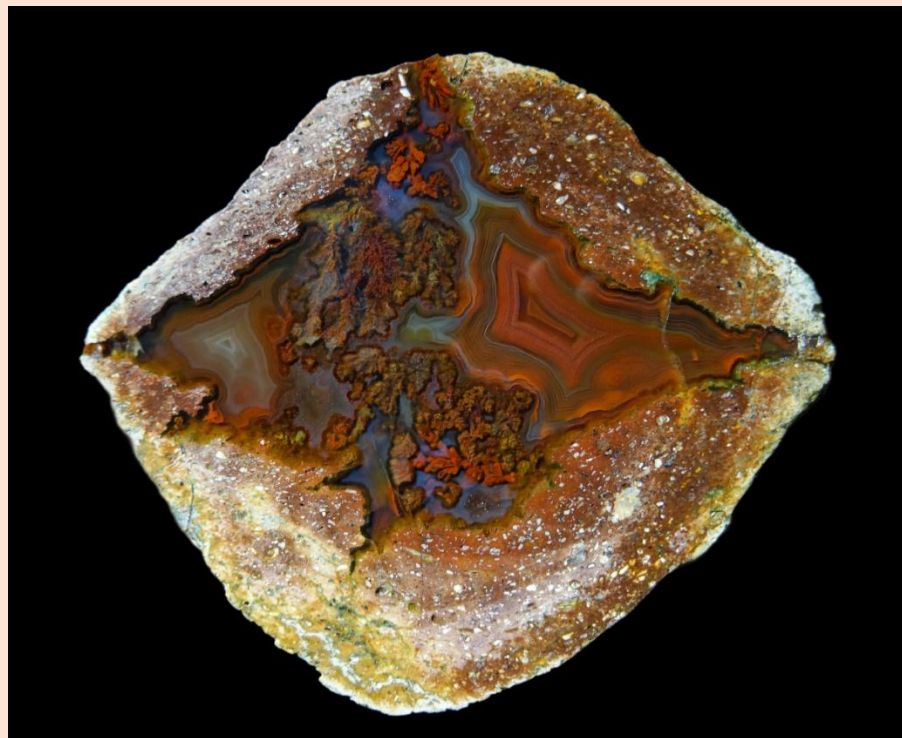
However, you can still purchase beautiful specimens at mineral shows, such as the Saxon Collectors' Exchange in Hormersdorf, or from some local collectors.



Plume agate.
7.5 cm. Peter
Wagler collection
& photo.



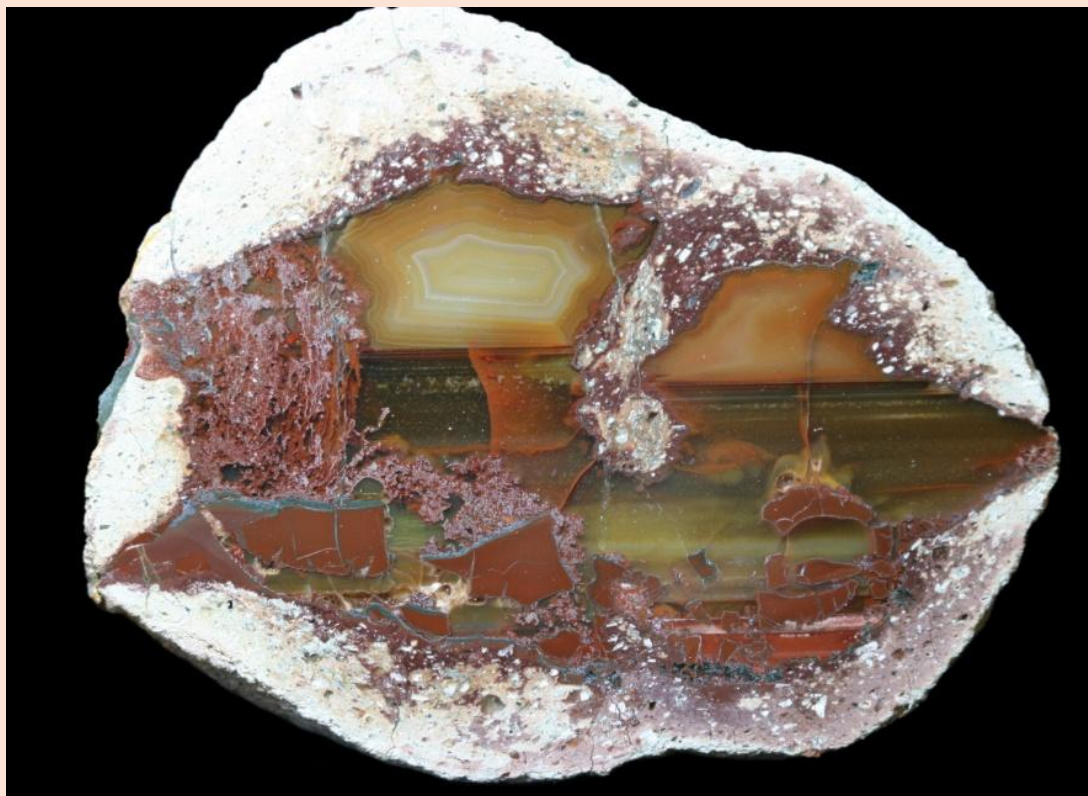
Plumes. 6.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



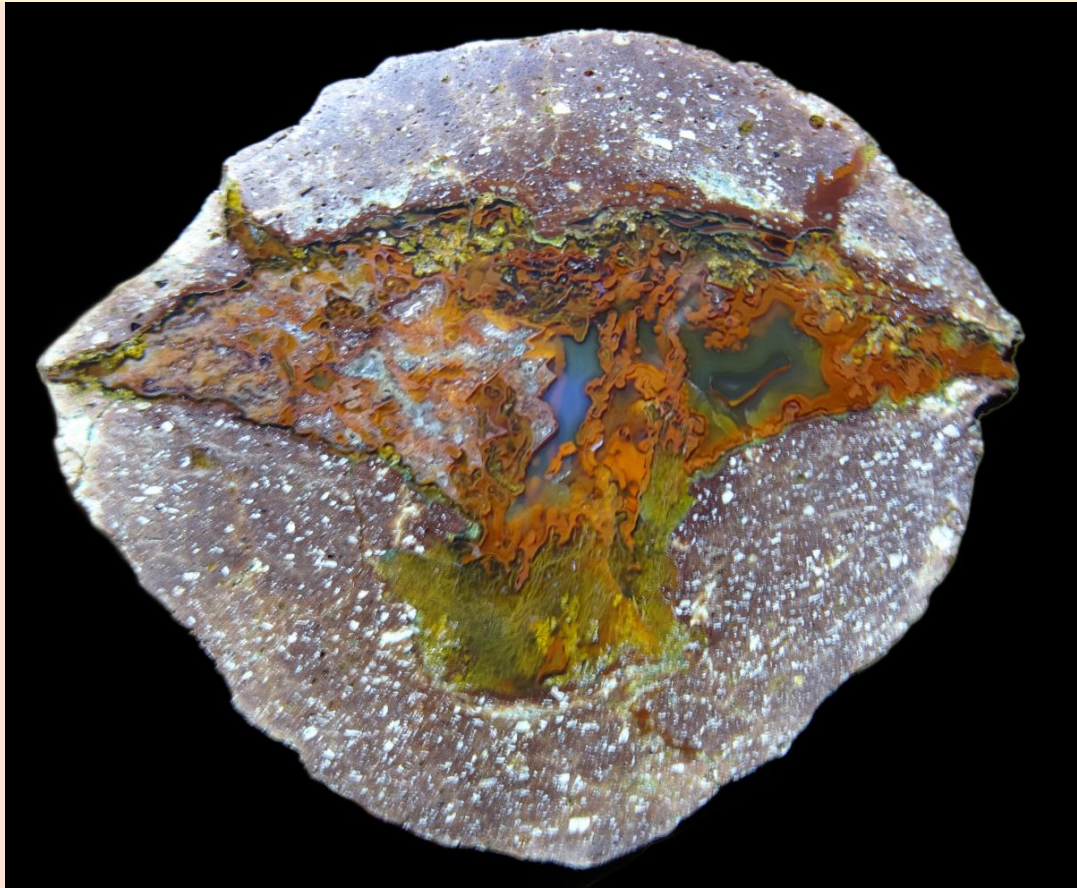
Plume agate. 6.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



8 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



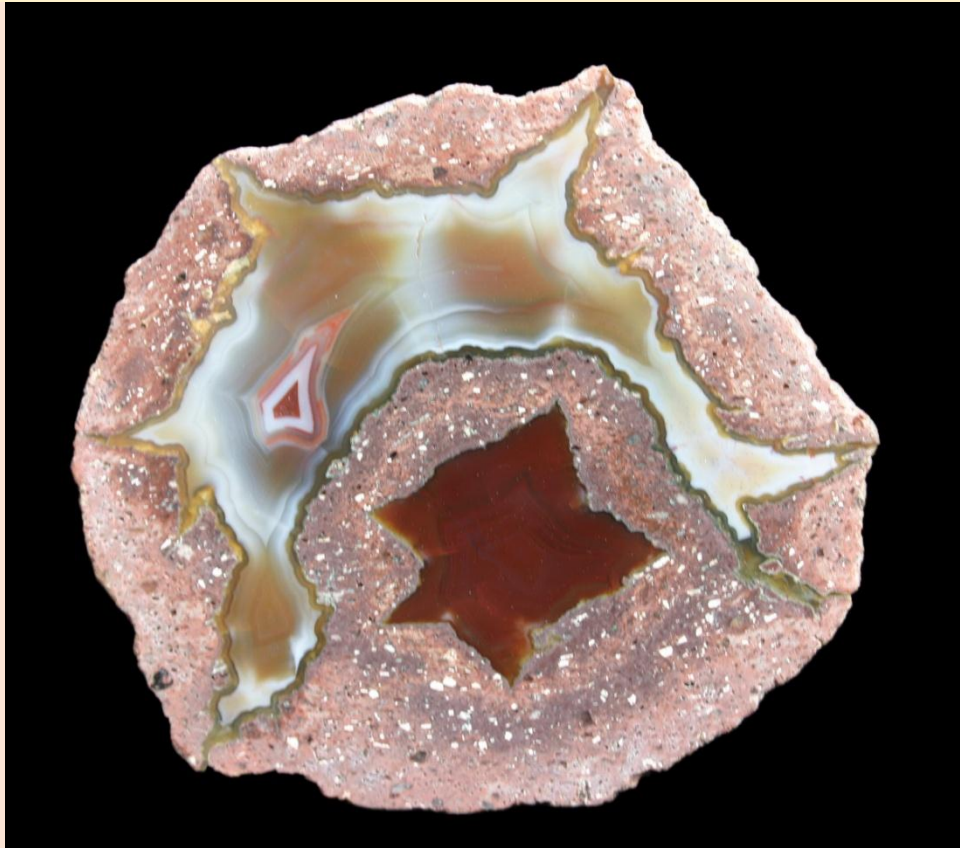
**Brecciated jasper in a double chamber thunderegg.
12 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.**



Moss agate. 9.3 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



Moss agate. 9.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



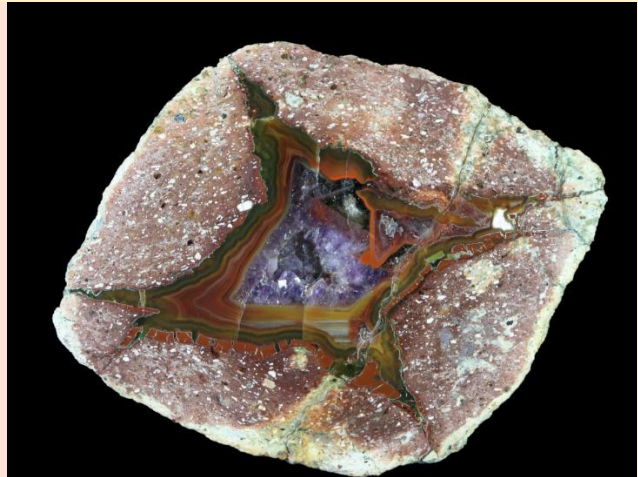
„Atoll agate“. 8.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



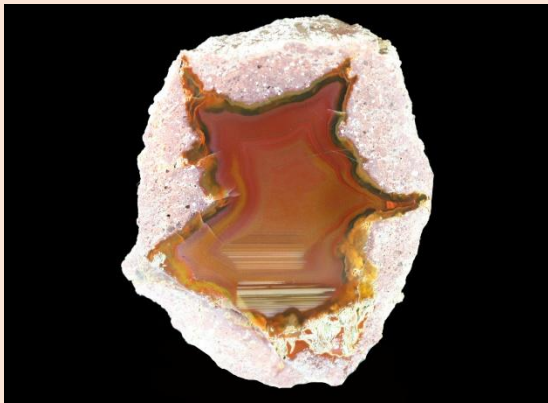
„Atoll agate“. 9.5 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo..



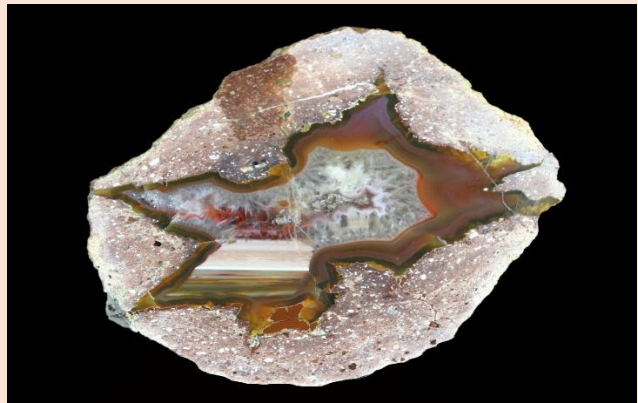
7 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



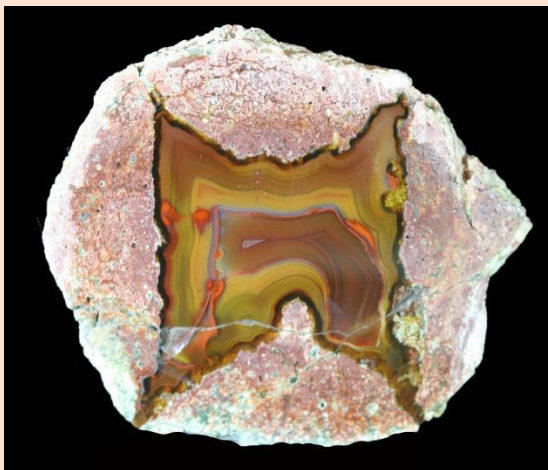
8 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



7 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



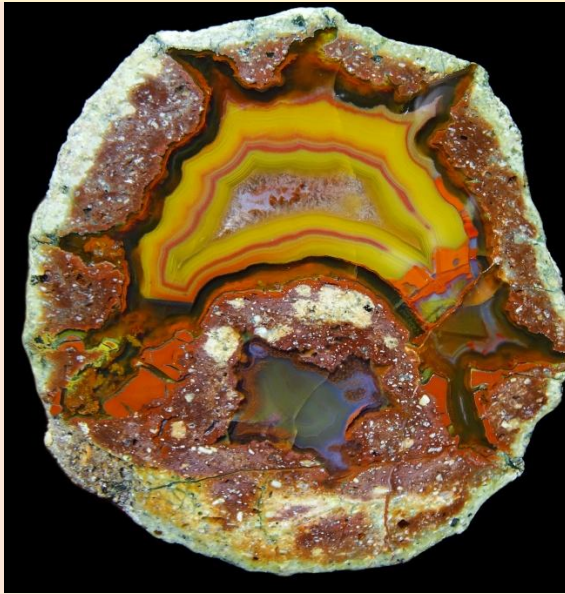
9 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



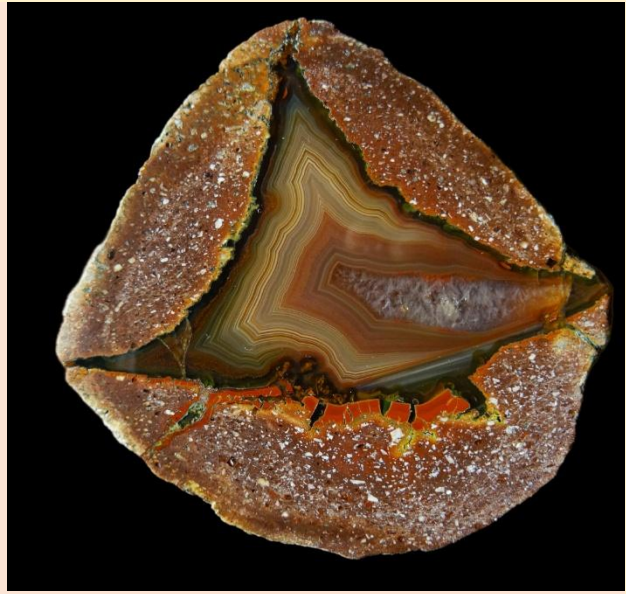
7 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



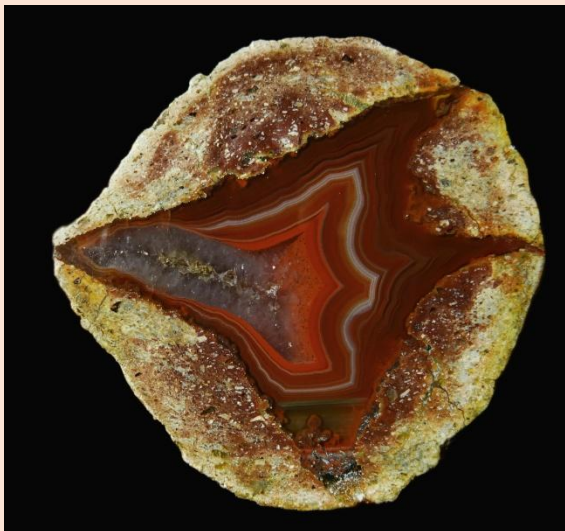
8.5 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



7 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



8 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



7 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



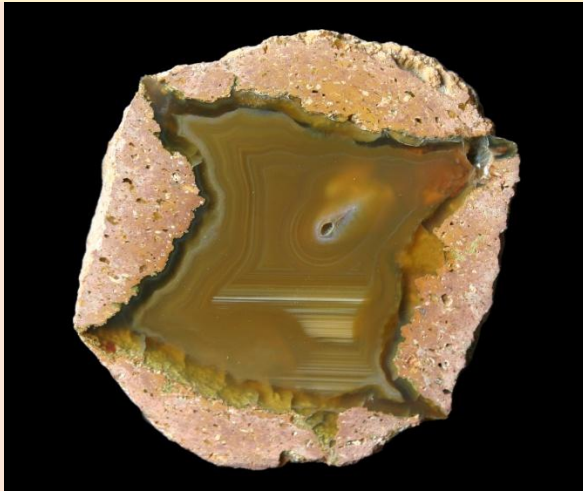
8.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



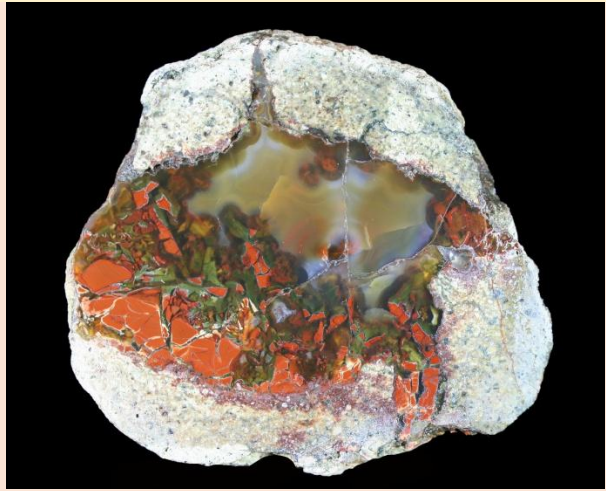
7.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



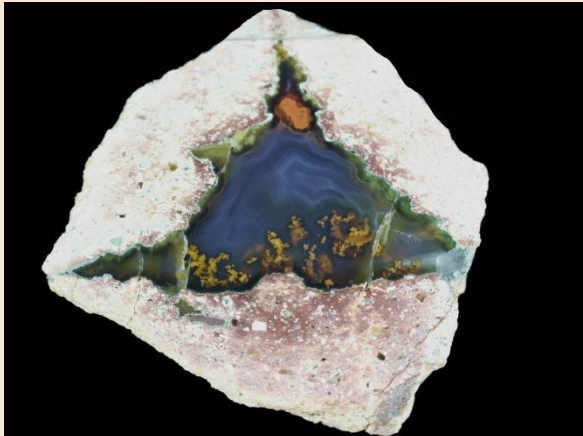
9.5 cm. Peter Wagler collection & photo.



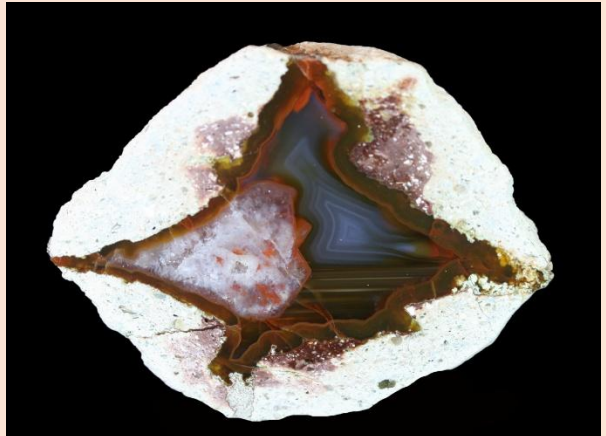
8.5 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



Jaspisbrekzien. 7.5 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



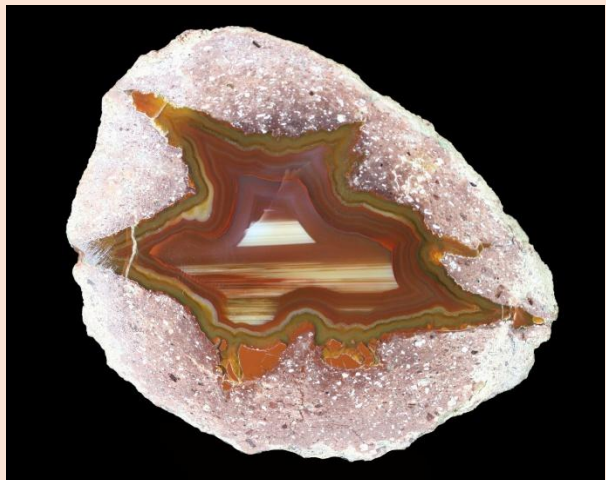
6 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



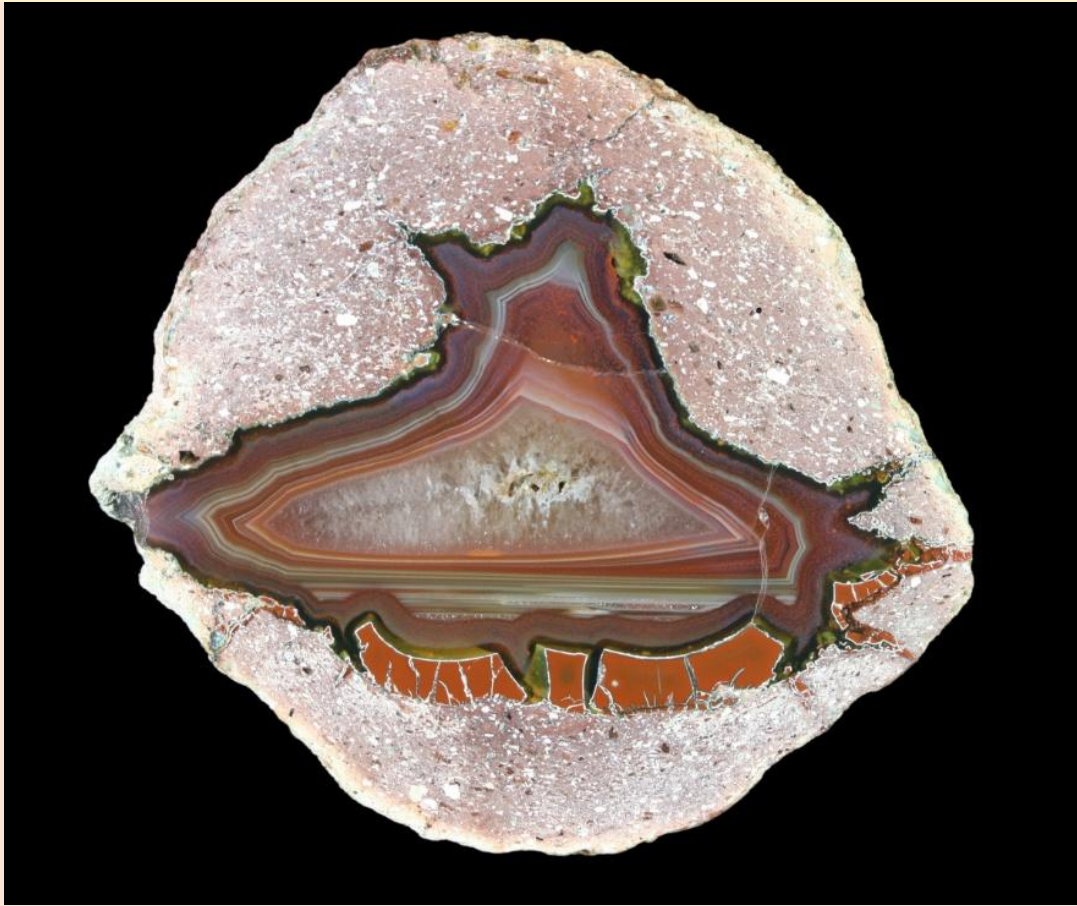
A pseudomorph in the left part of the agate.
7 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



8 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



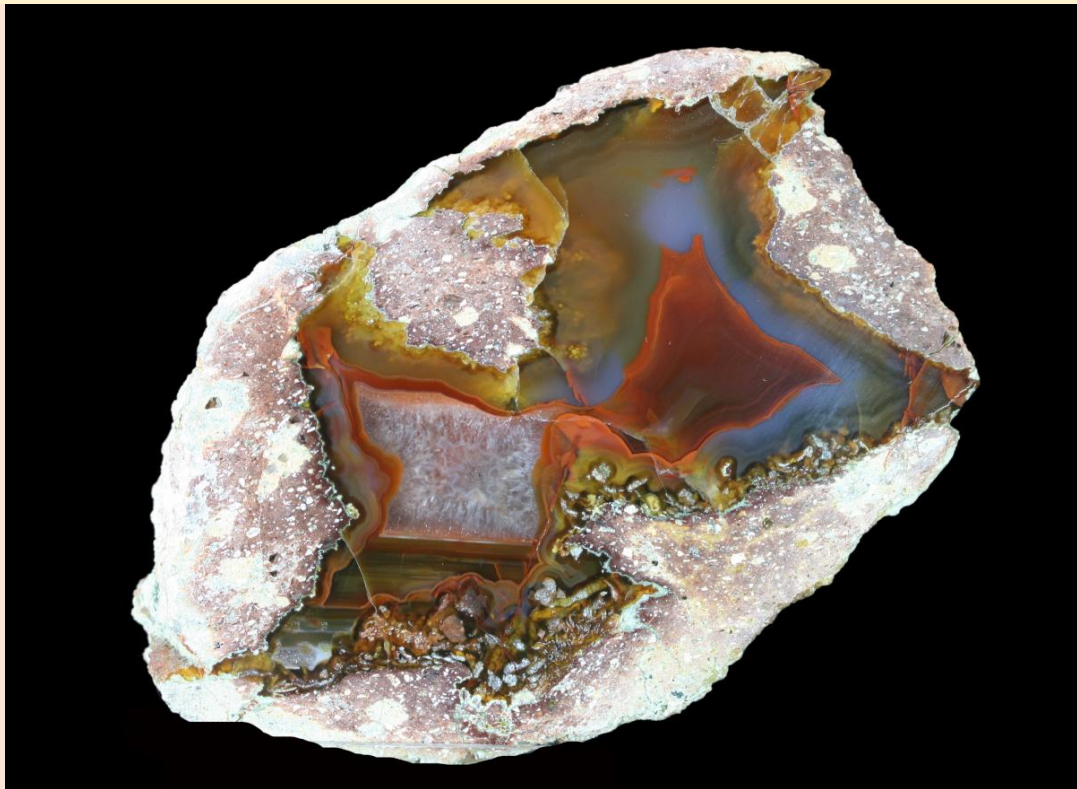
7.5 cm.
Andreas Händel collection & photo.



8 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



Plume agate. 3.4 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.



Double chamber agate. 8 cm. Andreas Händel collection & photo.

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