

Elephant Hair Bracelet History

For over a thousand years, the indigenous people of Kenya living in elephant country have worn elephant hair jewelry to honor the living bridge between this world and the next, and to enjoy the benefits these iconic animals are said to bring. African mythology regards the elephant as the connection between heaven and earth. Bracelets were originally made from the tail hairs, and wearing the jewelry is thought to bring protection from illness and harm, to restore and maintain fertility, and to bring great wealth and prosperity. Typically fashioned from single hairs that measured as much as 3 feet in length, the bracelet is virtually "one size fits all" thanks to an ingenious system of sliding knots.

Many prefer to honor the tradition by wearing the jewelry with a modern twist. Due to illegal poaching of the increasingly endangered elephant for the tusk ivory and other parts, artists have taken a responsible approach to continuing the legacy of elephant hair bracelets using strands of silver, gold or copper (and different combinations of the three) as an equally artful expression of the actual elephant hair strands and knots. The benefits are two-fold; the wearer celebrates the traditions of the African people, and no elephants are harmed in the name of fashion or traditional observance.

The Knots

Each elephant hair bracelet features 4 sliding knots, which allow the celebrant to adjust the size for ease in wearing. The knots are not only functional; they are central to the powerful symbolism. While there are minor differences in what the knots specifically represent from tribe to tribe, the unifying theme is that the knots represent the elements of nature:
fire, earth, air and water.

The Strands

The strands that pass through the knots represent the seasons of the year. While moving the knots along the strands in adjusting the bracelet, you're seeing the ancient African interpretation of the evolution of the calendar year. Each strand (season) passing through a knot (element) represents time moving through the forces of nature. With each movement, you bear witness to the forces of nature at work, the rainy days of spring and autumn, the arid, hot days of summer, the long, cool nights of winter. These forces are simply and beautifully illustrated on each handcrafted piece, as designed by those living in Kenyan elephant country many years ago.

This is my very small way of honoring the elephants. Thank you so very much for being a part of it. Whether it's a bracelet, pendant, or earrings, it's made with love by me.
May you wear it in good health always.

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