

## Kangaroos, Maple Leaves and Pandas: Famous Gold Bullion Coins

By Aila de la Rive, © MoneyMuseum

Investment gold coins are gold pieces minted after 1800 that contain at least 90 percent of pure gold. Such coins serve as stores of value or for speculation on the gold price. We here introduce some of the most famous of these bullion coins. There exist many more – the European Commission publish annually a list of more than 800 pieces that must be treated as investment gold coins in all EU member states.

## The Krugerrand



Republic of South Africa, 10 rand 2005, 1 ounce gold

In 1967, the South African Chamber of Mines came up with an idea to help market South African gold. It was to issue a 1-ounce bullion coin that would be sold at a very low premium over the intrinsic gold value. The coin got the name of Krugerrand, after the portrait of the politician Paul Kruger and the name of the South African currency, the rand. The reverse shows a springbok, South Africa's national animal.

Krugerrands were the first investment gold coins that contained one full troy ounce (31.1035 grams) of fine gold.

Diameter: 32.77 mm

Weight: 33.93 g

Fineness: .917

Gold content: 31.104 g / 1 oz

## The sovereign



United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, sovereign 1982, 1/4 ounce gold

Sovereigns were first introduced in 1489, and used in normal monetary circulation until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. At about this time, most countries stopped the production of gold coins for circulation and switched to a "fiat" coinage – to coins thus whose intrinsic value is lower than their face value. Today, there are no countries where gold coins circulate as regular part of the coinage system.

Great Britain resumed the production of gold sovereigns as bullion coins in 1957. They show Queen Elizabeth II on the obverse, and on the reverse Saint George slaying the dragon.

Diameter: 22.05 mm

Weight: 7.98 g

Fineness: .917

Gold content: 7.315 g / 0.2354 oz

## The Britannia



United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 100 pounds 2001, 1 ounce gold

Great Britain's traditional bullion coin is the sovereign. Its disadvantage is, however, that its gold value is difficult to calculate because it does not contain one troy ounce of gold, or a fraction of an ounce. This is why in 1987, Britannias were introduced in four weights, from one ounce to fractional sizes of 1/2 ounce, 1/4 ounce, and 1/10 ounce.

Britannias are among the world's most beautiful bullion coins. Their obverse depicts Queen Elizabeth II and the reverse shows Britannia, the personification of Great Britain. Britannia first appeared as a reverse type on Roman coins some 2,000 years ago.

Diameter: 32.69 mm

Weight: 34.05 g

Fineness: .917

Gold content: 31.104 g / 1 oz

## The Gold Eagle



United States of America, 50 dollars 2006, 1 ounce gold

American eagles were issued from the late 18th century for regular monetary circulation. The eagle coin had a face value of 10 dollars and the double eagle of 20 dollars, while half eagles and quarter eagles were 5 and 2.5 dollars respectively. They were regarded as the most beautiful American coins of all times. It was thus only natural to readopt the design when the US mint started to issue bullion coins in 1986.

Eagle investment coins come in weights of one ounce as well as 1/2, 1/4 and 1/10 ounce. All sizes feature a magnificent Liberty and an eagle landing in its nest.

Diameter: 32.7 mm

Weight: 34.05 g

Fineness: .9167

Gold content: 31.104 g / 1 oz

## The Nugget or Kangaroo



Commonwealth of Australia, 100 dollars 2008, 1 ounce gold

The Australian version of the 1-ounce bullion coin is the Nugget or Kangaroo. The name "nugget" harks back to the fact that in the first few years of their issue, from 1986 to 1989, the reverse of these coins pictured several famous Australian gold nuggets. Then the design was changed to feature different kangaroos, a more commonly known symbol of Australia. The obverse shows a portrait of the British queen Elizabeth II, the head of the Commonwealth of Nations, to which Australia belongs.

Diameter: 32.1 mm

Weight: 31.16 g

Fineness: .9999

Gold content: 31.104 g / 1 oz

## The 250-maloti coin



Kingdom of Lesotho, 250 maloti 1979, 1 ounce gold

The small kingdom of Lesotho in the south of Africa issues gold investment coins as well. The first were minted in 1966 on the occasion of the independence of the former British colony Basutoland and had face values of 1 loti or 4 maloti (plural of loti). From then on, Lesotho issued gold coins now and again; in 1979 appeared the first with a weight of one full troy ounce of gold and a face value of 250 maloti. It commemorated the International Year of the Child sponsored by UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund). The obverse shows a portrait of King Moshoeshe II.

Diameter: 31 mm

Weight: 31.1 g

Fineness: .9999

Gold content: 31.104 g / 1 oz

## The Maple Leaf



Canada, 200 dollars 2007, 1 ounce gold

Canada was the first country to issue a "pure" gold bullion coin, the Maple Leaf. When it was introduced in 1979, the Maple was made of .999 gold (99.9 percent gold content); four years later the fineness was changed to .9999 (99.99 percent gold content). At first, Maple Leaves were issued as 1-ounce versions only. Today, however, they are available in six different sizes and weights, from one ounce to 1/20 of an ounce.

The Maple Leaf, being Canada's emblem, was an obvious choice for the reverse of Canada's bullion coin. The obverse bears a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, the head of the Commonwealth of Nations, of which Canada is a member.

Diameter: 30 mm

Weight: 31.15 g

Fineness: .9999

Gold content: 31.104 g / 1 oz

## The chervonets



**Soviet Union, 10 rubles 1975, 1/4 ounce gold**

The term "chervonets" was originally used for diverse foreign gold coins circulating in Russia; it means something like "red coin." In 1923, a Russian gold coin with a face value of 10 rubles was issued under the name of chervonets for the first time. It weighed 8.6 grams and had a fineness of .900, which corresponded to a gold content of 7.74 grams and thus to about 1/4 of a troy ounce. Two years later, a second issue followed.

From 1975 to 1982, the Soviet Union resumed the minting of the golden chervonets. The coins were issued for sale abroad and intended to import foreign currency.

Diameter: 22 mm

Weight: 8.6 g

Fineness: .900

Gold content: 7.74 g / 0.25 oz

## The 50,000-ruble coin



Russian Federation, 50,000 rubles 2010, 160.77 ounce gold

Russia also issues modern gold investment coins – for instance this magnificent piece with a face value of 50,000 rubles and a weight of more than 5 kilograms (11 pounds). It is a commemoration coin on the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Bank of Russia. The obverse shows the bank's emblem, the two-headed eagle. The reverse bears the building of the main office of the bank in Saint Petersburg from 1860 to 1918. The portraits show, from left to right: Alexander Ludwig Stieglitz, the first governor of the bank, Tsar Alexander II, during whose reign the bank was founded, and Yevgeny Ivanovich Lamansky, who proposed and planned the establishment of a state bank and who advised the tsar on the undertaking.

Diameter: 130 mm

Weight: 5035 g

Fineness: .999

Gold content: 5000 g / 160.77 oz

## The Philharmonic



Republic of Austria, 100 euros 2008, 1 ounce gold

The Austrian gold investment coin, issued since 1989, is the so-called Philharmonic. The design celebrates the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, considered by many to be the finest in the world. The gold for the production of the Philharmonic coins is also, at a fineness of .9999, world class.

The obverse of the Philharmonic shows the great organ in the Golden Hall of Vienna's famous concert hall, the Wiener Musikverein. It is the home base of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. On the reverse are diverse musical instruments representing the orchestra.

Diameter: 36.5 mm

Weight: 31.1 g

Fineness: .9999

Gold content: 31.104 g / 1 oz

## The Vreneli



Swiss Confederation, 20 francs 1904, 0.187 ounce gold

Switzerland is famous for the gold stored in its banks. It also has a well-known gold coin, the Vreneli, a piece of 20 francs; it was issued from 1897 to 1949. The obverse depicts a young woman, the Vreneli (short for Verena). On the reverse is the Swiss coat of arms with its cross.

Diameter: 21.2 mm

Weight: 6.45 g

Fineness: .900

Gold content: 5.8 g / 0.187 oz

## The boat-shaped gold ingot Sycee



China, Qing dynasty, 1/10 tael, around 1900

Gold never circulated as legal tender in China. In everyday life the Chinese used bronze coins and for larger transactions silver ingots or paper money. As stores of value, however, gold was very popular in China too.

Since gold ingots were no official means of payment, they did not bear denominations. Instead, they were traded after their weight. This little ingot measures 21 millimeters in length and weighs 3.7 grams (0.13 ounces), which equals 1/10 tael, the Chinese weight measure for precious metals. The fineness of the gold is not indicated.

## The Panda



People's Republic of China, 100 yuan 1985, 1 ounce gold

Today, China issues modern bullion gold coins. The Chinese variant is the Panda, which was introduced in 1982. The premium charged on Pandas by the Chinese mint is higher than that on most other gold investment coins. This makes them less attractive to investors, yet it does not appear to have deterred collectors – understandable, since Panda coins are very pretty. Their reverse design is changed each year, which makes the Panda series even more interesting to collectors. The obverse always shows the Temple of Heaven in Beijing.

Diameter: 32.1 mm

Weight: 31.1 g

Fineness: .999

Gold content: 31.10 g / 1 oz

## A moneybag with 15 gold coins



Switzerland or France, moneybag with 15 gold coins, 2nd half of the 19th century

To invest one's capital in gold coins is well and good. But banks are, especially in times of war, not always safe. This might have been the reason why, supposedly in the late 19th century, somebody decided to sew his capital into this practical little pouch. It originally contained 20 gold coins, of which five were spent in the course of time.