

Lab for Thin Sections – Review

In my quest to find a lab that produces quality thin sections at a reasonable price, I have tested various labs. The following is a review of the various labs I have tried.

1. **Wagner Petrographic** (<http://www.wagnerpetrographic.com>)

Pros: Excellent quality, easy to work with

Cons: None

Bottomline: I was very impressed with this lab. Even though I have only used them for a small project, the thin sections all came out perfect. The turn-around time fell within the standard 4-6 week period. They also were very responsive to answering questions. They don't have the lowest prices, but their prices are very reasonable. They do offer a student discount on projects over \$250. I have recommended them to others, who were equally impressed.

2. **National Petrographic Services** (<http://www.nationalpetrographic.com>)

Pros: Low prices, discounts for students/university orders

Cons: Inconsistency with quality and turn-around time

Bottomline: Inconsistency on quality is a concern. I have gotten some really good thin sections from them, but also a few bad batches (air pockets, too thick or too thin). Turn-around time can also be an issue, unless you pay for a guaranteed turn-around time. However, this is generally the lab I recommend to students with small projects (e.g. honor's thesis or MA thesis) due to low prices and student discounts. A one-time, small project (50 or less thin sections) will likely be on time and of good quality.

3. **Spectrum Petrographics** (<http://www.petrography.com>)

Pros: Good quality

Cons: Expensive, sand in epoxy

Bottomline: They produce nice quality thin sections, but the sand in the epoxy and high prices are a deterrent. On the project that I submitted they included three cuts of the sherd per slide, but they used up the entire sherd. This was unexpected and unwanted. On the order, make sure you specify exactly how you want the sherd to be processed.

4. **Texas Petrographic Services** (<http://www.texaspetrographic.com>)

Pros: Low prices and fast turnaround

Cons: Terrible quality

Bottomline: I would not recommend this lab for ceramic thin sections. They do have very low prices and a quick turnaround, but the low quality made the thin sections unusable. The thin sections were full of air pockets and too thick to be analyzed. They also completely destroyed the sherds I submitted. Instead of cutting the sherd, the entire sherd was placed in the epoxy. Large sherds were not cut but broken and a piece placed in the epoxy.