

## Central American Coral Snake

**Description:** Body with narrow yellow or white rings that alternatively separate wide bright red and black bands. Tail and head are banded with yellow (or white) and black. Several non-venomous snakes may have a similar color sequence on the body. However, unlike the coral snake, the red bands of non-venomous snakes always extend onto the tail and sometimes onto the head. Reaches a total length of 3½ feet

**Habits:** Fairly common in forested areas throughout the country except the high mountains in the northwest. When disturbed, it is typically inoffensive, refusing to bite and sometimes hiding its head under its body. Unlike other venomous snakes in El Salvador, the venom of the coral snake is primarily neurotoxic (interferes with nerve signals), rather than hemotoxic (breaks down tissue), and thus a coral snake bite is comparatively painless and initially asymptomatic. However, a coral snake bite causes the nervous system to malfunction, potentially resulting in death and therefore the victim should be treated.



## Venomous Snakebite

Nearly all snakebites occur on an appendage (especially on the hands, arms, legs, or feet). If a venomous snakebite occurs, the spread of venom through the victim's body can be slowed and limited by wrapping the bitten appendage above the site of the bite (i.e., nearer the victim's torso) with a flexible material such as gauze, cloth, leather, etc., making certain it is not wrapped so tight as to impede blood flow. The bitten appendage should then be immobilized with a sling or similar type of device to the greatest extent practicable, and the victim should be rushed to the nearest medical facility for further evaluation and potential treatment. Do not offer the victim alcohol, cut the area of the bite, or attempt to suck out the venom, all of which will worsen the situation.

If a snakebite occurs, and it is uncertain whether the snake is venomous or non-venomous, attempt to safely take a photo of the snake, and promptly send it to a wildlife expert for identification. Be sure to stay outside of the snake's strike range – a minimum of five feet should suffice. An attempt to kill the snake should only be made as a last resort; doing so poises additional safety risks. If in doubt about the snake's identification, and if the identification cannot be made through a photo or the specimen itself, then the snakebite victim should be rushed to the nearest medical facility as a precaution.

**Disclaimer: the producers of this brochure are not liable for any harm or injuries that occur as a result of a venomous snakebite under any circumstances, whether it be purely accidental or otherwise. Bites from several snakes beyond those listed in this guide may produce unpleasant (albeit non-lethal) symptoms, and thus we recommend that all snakes be avoided whenever possible.**

## Guide to Venomous Snakes

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El Salvador is home to six species of venomous snake, all but one of which is a pit viper. Snakes (including those that are venomous) do not bite people without being provoked into doing so. Therefore, taking a few simple precautionary measures will greatly decrease the likelihood of an accident; in particular, pay attention to where you place your hands or feet, and try to avoid thickly vegetated areas. If you encounter a snake while in the field, do not try to capture, kill, or play with it; most accidents occur while the snake is being molested, and the vast majority of snakes encountered in the field are non-venomous.

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Cantil



**Description:** Body coloration ranges from brown to black, separated into wide bands by very narrow, irregular white lines. Two bold white lines are present on each side of the head that extend backwards from the tip of the snout, one of which continues through the eye to the side of the neck, whereas the other continues along the upper edge of the mouth to the side of the neck. Reaches a total length of 4½ feet.

**Habits:** Uncommon, it is typically found near damp sites (e.g., creeks, wetlands) in otherwise drier areas in the southern and central parts of the country. When approached, it will typically remain still to try to avoid further detection. If disturbed further, it will coil its body, and rapidly shake its tail. However, it will not bite unless cornered or handled. Nonetheless, due to its large size and venom capacity, a bite may be serious and life-threatening.

Jumping Pit  
Viper



**Description:** Body coloration ranges from light brown to light gray, with a row of large, diamond-shaped, dark brown to black spots along the middle of the back, and extending down the side of the body towards another row of smaller, similarly-colored spots to which they often connect. Side of head has a distinctive dark brown to black stripe that extends from the eye to the neck. Reaches a total length of 2½ feet.

**Habits:** Confined to mountainous forests in the west-central and northwestern parts of the country. When approached, it will typically remain still to try to avoid further detection. If disturbed further, it will coil and inflate its body, and may rapidly strike (occasionally elevating its body off the ground by a few inches in the process, hence its name). A bite may be serious and life-threatening.

Hog-nosed  
Pit Viper



**Description:** Body coloration ranges from light brown to light gray, with a paired row of square-ish dark brown spots separated by a narrow yellow to orange stripe along the middle of the back. A second and third row of similarly-colored, circular, smaller spots runs along the middle and lower sides of the body. Head lacks a distinctive pattern. Reaches a total length of 2½ feet.

**Habits:** Common in drier areas in the southern and central parts of the country. When approached, it will typically remain still to try to avoid further detection. It is generally inoffensive, and will only bite as a last resort. Its bite is typically not life-threatening. However, the tissue-destroying properties of its venom can still result in the eventual loss of fingers or toes in untreated bites.

Montane  
Pit Viper



**Description:** Body coloration ranges from light brown to light gray, with a row of dark brown to black spots that frequently connect to form a zigzag band along the middle of the back. A second row of similarly-colored, non-connecting, smaller spots run along the side of the body. Side of head has a distinctive dark brown to black stripe that extends from the eye to the neck. Reaches a total length of 2½ feet.

**Habits:** Confined to mountainous forests in the west-central and northwestern parts of the country. When approached, it will typically remain still to try to avoid further detection. Its bite is typically not life-threatening. However, the tissue-destroying properties of its venom can still result in the eventual loss of fingers or toes in untreated bites, and therefore the victim should be treated.

Neotropical  
Rattlesnake



**Description:** Body coloration brown, with a row of large, diamond-shaped, white to yellow and dark brown to black spots with lighter-colored centers along the middle of the back, and extending downwards along the side of the body towards another row of smaller black spots to which they sometimes connect. Side of head has a dark brown to black stripe that extends from the eye to the neck. Reaches a total length of 5½ feet.

**Habits:** Common in drier areas in the southern and central parts of the country. If disturbed further, it will coil up and slightly elevate its head and anterior part of its body, and may rapidly strike. Unlike other venomous snakes in El Salvador (or rattlesnakes in the United States), the venom of a Neotropical rattlesnake is both strongly hemotoxic (breaks down tissue) and neurotoxic (interferes with nerve signals). A bite may be serious and life-threatening.