



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: Widespread across the mountainous areas in the south-central part of the country. It is seldom observed due to its highly sedentary habits. 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.



Palm Pit Vipers

Description: Four species of palm pit vipers occur in Guatemala. Head, body, and tail coloration usually green, but occasionally gray, yellow, or blue. With or without a pattern that may include small white, brown, or black spots scattered over the body, or larger yellow, red, blue, brown, or black spots along the top of the back. Reaches a total length of 3 feet.

Habits: Widespread in forested and other vegetated habitats in most parts of the country except the southern lowlands. They typically occur in trees and other vegetation above the ground. When approached, they remain still to try to avoid further detection. If disturbed further, they may rapidly strike. Although not particularly large, their venom is relatively potent, and a bite may be serious and life-threatening.



Coral Snakes

Description. Seven species of coral snakes occur in Guatemala, all of which have a similar appearance (body with narrow yellow or white rings that alternatively separate wide red and narrow 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 snakes, the red bands of non-venomous snakes always extend onto the tail and sometimes onto the head. Reach a total length of 3 feet.

Habits: Fairly common in most areas (especially forests) throughout the country except the high mountains. When disturbed, they are typically inoffensive, refusing to bite and sometimes hiding its head under its body (while curling and raising its tail in the air). The venom of the coral snake is primarily neurotoxic (interferes with nerve signals) 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.

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.

Prepared
By:



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Guatemala is home to 18 species of venomous snake, including various pit vipers and coral snakes. 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.



Cantil

Description: Body coloration ranges from brown to black, separated into wide bands by very narrow, irregular white lines. All individuals have two bold white lines 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, typically found near damp sites (e.g., creeks, wetlands) in otherwise drier areas in the southern lowlands 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.



Rainforest 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 orange to red 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 2 feet.

Habits: Common in forested areas in the northern half 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.



Slender 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. Reaches a total length of 2½ feet. **Habits:** Common in the drier areas in the southern

lowlands 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.



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: Inhabits forested areas in most parts of the country except the high mountains and southern lowlands. 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). Its bite is typically not life-threatening, however victims should be treated.



Fer-de-lance

Description: Body coloration ranges from various shades of brown to gray with a row of alternating light and dark triangular bands along the side and across the top of the body that are separated by whitish

diagonal stripes. Various small dark spots may occur in the light bands, and small light spots may occur in the dark bands. Side of head of all individuals has a distinctive dark brown or gray stripe bordered above by a whitish stripe that extends from the eye to the neck. Reaches a total length of 7½ feet.

Habits: Common and widespread across a diversity of habitats throughout the country except the high mountains and southern lowlands. When approached, it will typically remain still to try to avoid further detection. If disturbed further, it may attempt to quickly slither away, or may coil and rapidly strike. A bite may be serious and life-threatening.



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. Posterior part of the body is predominately blackish. Reaches a total length of 5½ feet.

Habits: Common in drier areas in the southern part of the country. When approached, it will typically remain still to try to avoid further detection. If disturbed further, it will coil up and slightly elevate its head and anterior part of its body, and may rapidly strike. The venom of a Neotropical rattlesnake is both strongly hemotoxic (breaks down tissue) and neurotoxic (interferes with nerve signals). Thus, a bite may be serious and life-threatening.