

# VENOMOUS SNAKES OF SOUTHWEST ASIA

## PIT VIPERS/VIPERS

Species	Where Found
<b>ARABIAN VIPER</b> <i>Echis coloratus</i>	Dry rocky areas and scrub forests
<b>ASIATIC PIT VIPER</b> <i>Gloydius intermedius saxatilis</i>	Dry areas, especially lightly wooded areas around rocky bluffs
<b>BARAN'S VIPER</b> <i>Vipera barani</i>	Forests and farmland in mountain foothills
<b>BULGAR DAGH VIPER</b> <i>Vipera bulgardaghica</i>	Thorn-cushion meadows, grasslands, and rocky mountainsides
<b>CAUCASUS VIPER</b> <i>Vipera kaznakovi</i>	Meadows and wooded, rocky hillsides with southern exposure
<b>DESERT HORNED VIPER</b> <i>Cerastes cerastes</i>	Rock outcroppings, scrub brush and sandy areas in deserts
<b>LATIFI'S VIPER</b> <i>Vipera latifi</i>	Steep, rocky sides of the Lar Valley, Iran
<b>LEBANESE MOUNTAIN VIPER</b> <i>Vipera bornmuellardi</i>	Rock covered hillsides, cedar forests, and meadows in mountainous areas
<b>LEVANTINE VIPER</b> <i>Macrovipera lebetina</i>	Dry, rocky areas and farms in mountainous areas
<b>LONG-NOSED VIPER</b> <i>Vipera ammodytes</i>	Dry, rocky slopes with southern exposure
<b>MC MAHON'S VIPER</b> <i>Eristicophis macmahoni</i>	Sandy deserts
<b>MEADOW VIPER</b> <i>Vipera ursinii</i>	Flatlands with sparse trees or bushes and wooded hillsides in mountainous regions
<b>NEAR EAST VIPER</b> <i>Vipera xanthina</i>	Around farms in stream valleys
<b>PALESTINE VIPER</b> <i>Vipera palaestinae</i>	Around farms and buildings in stream valleys
<b>PERSIAN SAND VIPER</b> <i>Pseudocerastes persicus</i>	Flat, sandy or rocky desert areas
<b>PUFF ADDER</b> <i>Bitis arietans</i>	Grasslands, scrub brush, and around buildings and farms

## SNAKE IDENTIFICATION

PIT VIPERS/VIPERS		COBRAS/BLACK SNAKES/SEA SNAKES	
	Long, hinged fangs that tuck into roof of mouth when not in use.		Short fangs fixed in erect position in front of mouth.
	Vertically elliptical eye pupils; pit vipers with heat sensing organ between eye and nostril.		Round eye pupils.
	Broad triangular head very distinct from narrow neck.		Head small and not distinct from the body.
MOLE VIPERS			
	Head small and not distinct from the body; long hinged fangs that can be extended laterally when mouth is closed.		Eyes very small, pupils round; snout pointed, broad, flattened.

## PIT VIPERS/VIPERS

Species	Where Found
<b>RADDE'S ROCK VIPER</b> <i>Vipera raddei</i>	Rocky areas and farmlands
<b>SAHARA SAND VIPER</b> <i>Cerastes vipera</i>	Sandy and scrub desert areas
<b>SAW-SCALED VIPER</b> <i>Echis carinatus</i>	Barren, rocky, and sandy desert areas, scrub forests, and around buildings
<b>SAW-SCALED VIPER</b> <i>Echis carinatus multisquamatus</i>	Barren, rocky, and sandy desert areas, scrub forests, and around buildings
<b>SAW-SCALED VIPER</b> <i>Echis carinatus sochureki</i>	Barren, rocky, and sandy desert areas, scrub forests, and around buildings
<b>EGYPTIAN SAW-SCALED VIPER</b> <i>Echis pyramidum</i>	Barren, rocky, and sandy desert areas, scrub forests, and around buildings
<b>WAGNER'S VIPER</b> <i>Vipera wagneri</i>	High plateaus and mountains of Azerbaijan, Iran
<b>ZAGROS MOUNTAIN VIPER</b> <i>Vipera albicornuta</i>	Sandy, dry regions with sparse vegetation in the Zagros mountains of Iran

## MOLE VIPERS

Species	Where Found
<b>ARABIAN MOLE VIPER</b> <i>Atractaspis microlepidota andersoni</i>	In burrows under rocks, concrete slabs, logs or planks in moist areas near oases and around farms
<b>OASIS MOLE VIPER</b> <i>Atractaspis engaddensis</i>	In burrows under rocks, concrete slabs, logs or planks in moist areas near oases and around farms

## COBRAS

Species	Where Found
<b>ARABIAN COBRA</b> <i>Naja haje arabicus</i>	Rocky hillsides and flatlands with scrub brush, grasslands, and irrigated fields
<b>CENTRAL ASIAN COBRA</b> <i>Naja naja oxiana</i>	Stony or rocky, shrub-covered mountain foothills

## DESERT BLACK SNAKES

Species	Where Found
<b>DESERT BLACK SNAKE</b> <i>Walterinnesia aegyptia</i>	Barren, rocky mountain hillsides, sandy deserts, as well as gardens, irrigated fields

## SEA SNAKES

Species	Where Found
<b>BEAKED SEA SNAKE</b> <i>Enhydryna schistosa</i>	Marine inshore and offshore waters; prefer warm, shallow waters without strong surf or current; also mouths of rivers and bays, and in mangrove swamps
<b>BLUE-BANDED SEA SNAKE</b> <i>Hydrophis cyanocinctus</i>	Marine inshore and offshore waters; prefer warm, shallow waters without strong surf or current; also mouths of rivers and bays, and in mangrove swamps
<b>SHAW'S SEA SNAKE</b> <i>Lepidopsis curtus</i>	Marine inshore and offshore waters; prefer warm, shallow waters without strong surf or current; also mouths of rivers and bays, and in mangrove swamps
<b>STOKE'S SEA SNAKE</b> <i>Astrota stokesii</i>	Marine inshore and offshore waters; prefer warm, shallow waters without strong surf or current; also mouths of rivers and bays, and in mangrove swamps
<b>YELLOW-BELLIED SEA SNAKE</b> <i>Polanis platurus</i>	Marine inshore and offshore waters; prefer warm, shallow waters without strong surf or current; also mouths of rivers and bays, and in mangrove swamps

## SNAKE BITE PREVENTION

Venomous snakes are found throughout Southwest Asia. Assume that any snake you encounter is venomous. Leave snakes alone. Many people are bitten because they try to kill a snake or get a closer look at it.

As tactical situations permit, avoid high risk snake habits. Locate bivouacs away from piles of brush, rocks or other debris. Avoid swimming in coastal areas where sea snakes abound.

Remediate conditions which attract snakes. Remove woodpiles, rock piles, construction debris, dumps, dense undergrowth, and similar shelter for snakes. Store supplies elevated off the ground. Practice good sanitation. Control rodents.

Practice "snake smart" behavior. Shake out bedding and clothes before use. Sleep off the ground, if possible. Know that thick leather boots offer the best foot protection. Avoid walking alone. Keep to clear paths.

Be alert in areas where snakes may be hiding or sunning. Don't reach or place parts of body into uninspected places, especially in high grass or among rocks. Keep hands off of rock ledges. Never sit on or step over large rocks or logs without first checking to see what is on the other side.

In the unit compound, keep doors, windows and vents closed whenever possible. Block holes in foundations, crawl spaces, ceilings and roofs.

Use a stick, bag or other container and do not handle the head when transporting a dead snake that is to be identified.

## SNAKE BITE FIRST AID

- Avoid panic!
- Move victim out of danger and place at rest.
- Reassure and calm the patient.
- Remove rings and constrictive items.
- Lightly immobilize injured part in functional position.
- Record the appearance and progress of symptoms in as much detail as practical.
- Transport victim to medical facility as soon as possible.
- Retain snake for identification if possible.

## SNAKE VENOMS AND THEIR EFFECTS

Bites by venomous (poisonous) snakes result in a wide range of symptoms, from simple puncture wounds to life-threatening illness and death. There are two types of venom: neurotoxins and hemotoxins. All snake venom has both neurotoxins and hemotoxins in it, but some snakes have more neurotoxic venom and others have more hemotoxic venom. Antivenin, which can treat the symptoms of the venom of the cobras, black snakes and pit vipers as well as most species of vipers found in Southwest Asia, is available. There are no antivenins for sea snakes or mole vipers.

Venom Types	Snakes with this Venom	Action/Symptoms	Picture
Neurotoxin	Cobras	Affects the nervous system (the brain and nerves). Either destroy or paralyze the nerves that control the heart and breathing. Victims may die from lack of air or heart failure. Bites by cobras and desert black snakes are immediately painful and tender to touch. Specific symptoms of cobra bites and desert black snakebites include drowsiness, difficulty in speaking, drooling, blurred vision, shortness of breath and loss of consciousness. These symptoms can occur within one hour after the bite. In more severe bites, a person can stop breathing within minutes. Death of tissue at the bite site is quite common.	
	Desert Black Snakes		
	Sea Snakes	The venom of sea snakes is painless and only small amounts of venom are usually injected. Death is rare. The more serious bites produce muscle stiffness, difficulty speaking and swallowing, flu-like symptoms and muscular paralysis. Death from shock is rare and happens only after a very severe bite.	
Hemotoxin	Pit Vipers	Affects the blood system. Hemotoxins attack blood cells and also destroy both muscles and blood vessels. Hemotoxic venoms allow blood to leak into the surrounding tissue, causing severe swelling, pain, and discoloration at the site of the snakebite. Victims may die from kidney failure or shock.	
	Vipers	Their venom causes pain, blistering, bleeding, and destruction of tissue around the bite wound. Viper and pit viper bite victims may bleed from the bite site or bleed from the mouth or old wounds. Viper, mole viper and pit viper bite victims may experience nausea, vomiting, belly pain and sweating. Liver damage and gangrene may occur. Death from shock can occur soon after a severe bite.	
	Mole Vipers		

## SNAKE DISTRIBUTION CHECKLIST

Common Name	Location													
	Iran	Iraq	Israel	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Syria	Turkey	U.A.E.	Yemen	
<b>PIT VIPERS AND VIPERS</b>														
Arabian Viper			X	X			X		X					X
Asiatic Pit Viper	X													
Baran's Viper													X	
Bulgar Dagh Viper													X	
Caucasus Viper	X											X		
Desert Horned Viper	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
Egyptian Saw-scaled Viper							X		X					X
Latifi's Viper	X													
Lebanese Mountain Viper			X	X		X					X			
Levantine Viper	X	X	X	X		X				X	X			
Long-Nosed Viper	X									X	X			
McMahon's Viper	X													
Meadow Viper	X										X			
Near East Viper											X			
Palestine Viper			X	X		X				X				
Persian Sand Viper	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X
Puff Adder							X		X					X
Radde's Rock Viper	X	X											X	
Sahara Sand Viper			X											
Saw-scaled Viper ( <i>Echis carinatus</i> )	X						X							X
Saw-scaled Viper ( <i>E. carinatus multisquamatus</i> )	X													
Saw-scaled Viper ( <i>E. carinatus sochureki</i> )	X	X					X		X					X
Wagner's Viper	X										X			
Zagros Mountain Viper	X													
<b>MOLE VIPERS</b>														
Arabian Mole Viper									X					X
Oasis Mole Viper				X	X				X					
<b>COBRAS AND BLACK SNAKES</b>														
Arabian Cobra							X		X					X
Central Asian Cobra	X													
Desert Black Snake	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X				
<b>SEA SNAKES</b>														
Arabian Gulf Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Barred Sea Snake	X													
Beaked Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Blue Sea Snake	X													
Blue-banded Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Bombay Sea Snake	X													
Hardwicke's Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Ornate Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Schmidt's Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Shaw's Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Stoke's Sea Snake	X													
Yellow Sea Snake	X	X	X											
Yellow-bellied Sea Snake	X	X	X											

Yellow indicates where snakes are found.