



## African Rock Python *Python sebae* and *Python natalensis*

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- African rock pythons naturally occur in the plains, savannahs, and semi tropical forests of western and central Africa to sub Saharan South Africa depending on the two species.
- A large, fairly heavy bodied python that appears very similar to the Burmese python (*Python bivittatus*). Ground color varies from dark brown, olive, to olive brown with irregular yellowish, yellow brown, to chestnut yellow stripes, blotches, or streaks. Has a distinct “arrowhead” shaped marking on the head.
- Two species are known, the Northern African Python (*Python sebae*) and Southern African Python (*Python natalensis*).
- As with other large pythons, African rock pythons are mainly sedentary ambush predators.
- If provided the proper care, African rock pythons can attain longevity of 20-25 years or more.

### Size

Ranges from 18-24 inches as neonates. 9-18 feet on average for adults. **Consider the potential adult size and long term commitment of keeping a large snake prior to obtaining one.**

### Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling African rock pythons can be housed in a 20-30 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adults should be housed in a \*minimum\* of a Vision or similar style enclosure that is 6' X 3' to 8' X 3'. Rock pythons will thrive on a substrate of newspaper, cage liner material, or cypress mulch. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide a water bowl or dish and a hide box at all times in the enclosure. Artificial foliage, driftwood, and other cage furnishings can provide additional security.

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Overhead, incandescent lighting can also be used, but is not required for most pythons (which are primarily nocturnal). Ideal temperatures for Afrocks range from 75-80 degrees F on the cool side and 85-92 degrees F on the warm side.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

### Feeding/Diet

In the wild, African rock pythons will prey upon a variety of animals including rodents and other small to large sized mammals, birds, and lizards, as well as other reptiles.

Most young Burmese African rock pythons are large enough to be started off on weanling to small adult mice or rats once per 5-7 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult Afrocks can be fed medium to large rabbits once every 14 days (or bi weekly). A general rule of thumb to follow when feeding snakes is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the widest point of the snake.

### Handling

As with many snakes, hatchling and juvenile Afrocks are often initially more nervous and defensive. They may gape and hiss, and attempt to bite what they perceive to be a threat or a predator. Handle them gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. African rock

pythons hold a bad reputation for their aggressiveness, which amounts to their lesser popularity than the Burmese and Reticulated pythons in the hobby and industry. Some Afrocks can be calmed and handled to the point of being docile, but **this is not a beginner's species of snake**. Large constrictors are still very strong animals that should be handled carefully. Do not place or allow a larger snake around the neck when handling a Burmese python and **please follow safe handling practices when keeping or working with large snakes**.

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***