

Morro Rock is important to historians, biologists, geologists, and ecologists. It is also a sacred site to the Salinas people, and central to at least four of their legends.

The Salinan Tribe has been climbing Morro Rock twice a year, during the summer and winter solstice, for centuries to perform religious ceremonies.

The following, is the summer legend of the Rock:

The Legend of The Serpent

Once there was an animal which ate the Indians and was called Serpent. The whirlwind was his protector and brought him food. Prairie-Falcon heard of him and said, "what shall we do?"

"How many powers have you?" asked Raven.

"I have one so fast that the snake will not be able to catch me."

"Good. In two or three different mountains, there are my powers."

"Where?" asked Prairie-Falcon.

"At Asomeneka."

"And the other?"

"At Asumloyam." (Both mountains are near to Cholam, where the snake lived.) "And you?"

"Oh, I'll risk my neck anywhere!"

"Good! Where is your power?"

"At the Morro; that is the last power."

"Good! I have been there, that's all right. Let's go and see the snake."

They went and the snake awoke, and when he awoke he cried out for the whirlwind. "Come along nephew!" cried Prairie-Falcon. Along come the wind, felling everything in its path. "Good! Run!! Come on !!!" shouted Prairie-Falcon and they fled across country with the snake and the wind close behind them.

"Fly up!" yelled one.

"No, down!" shouted the other.

"Summon up your strength or he will catch us! Good!"

Serpent came yelling.

"Just remember your powers," entreated Prairie-Falcon. "Good, they have passed."

"I am going to cry," said Raven.

"No! Don't cry! Cast your spell! Good!"

"Wait a moment; there in the mountains are my powers!"

"Yes, fly up! Good! I remember mine at the Morro."

"Good!" said Raven. "Fly ahead, I am tired, uncle!"

"Just summon all your strength or the snake will get us! Fly up! Go!"

And they flew towards Morro with the snake in pursuit. He wrapped himself around the Morro from beneath and the allies seated themselves at the top. He had almost caught them when up jumped Prairie-Falcon and seized his charm. With it he cut the snake into four pieces and killed him.

And from these four pieces were formed the snakes of today. On this account there are rattlesnakes and others; therefore their flesh is poison. Many snakes got their poison thus. Coyote also came and secured poison. There are many little rattlesnakes at the coast near Morro. The old snake said, "They shall live forever, I have died, but they shall live."

Told by Maria Ocarpia
Courtesy of Salinan Tribe

**Please note that climbing Morro Rock is not allowed outside of tribal permission.