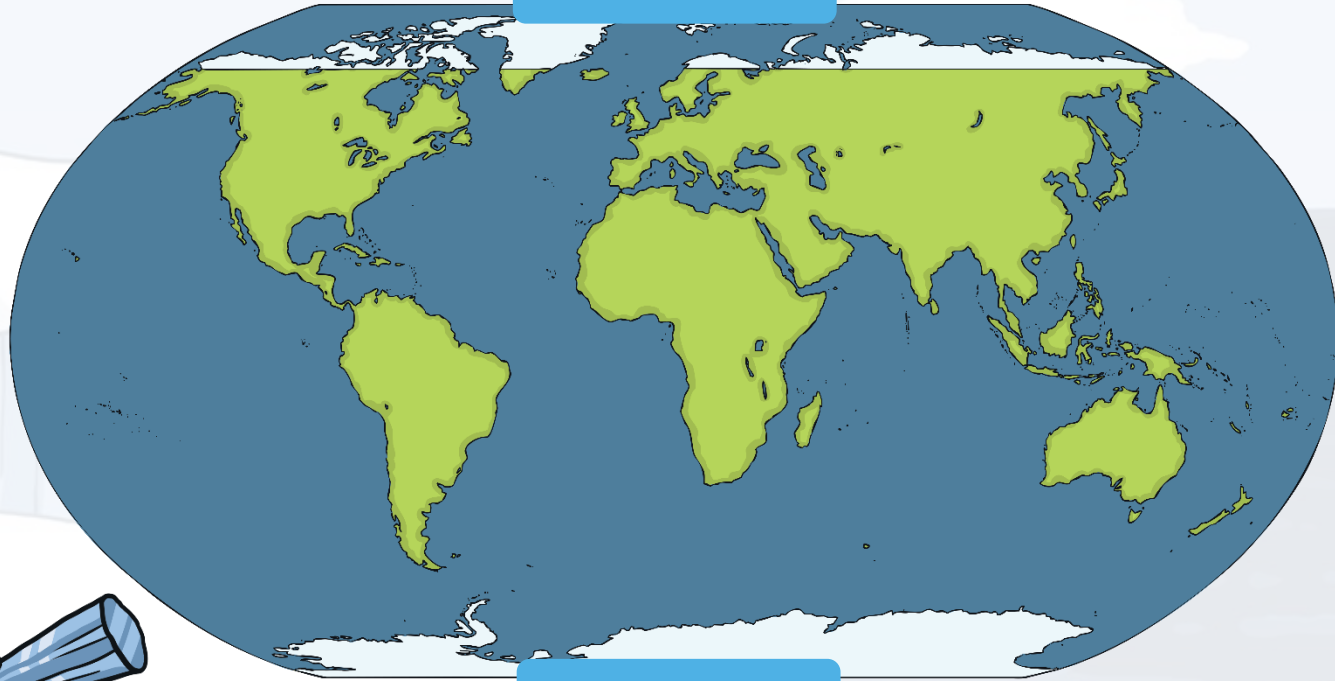


Where Are the Polar Regions?

The Arctic



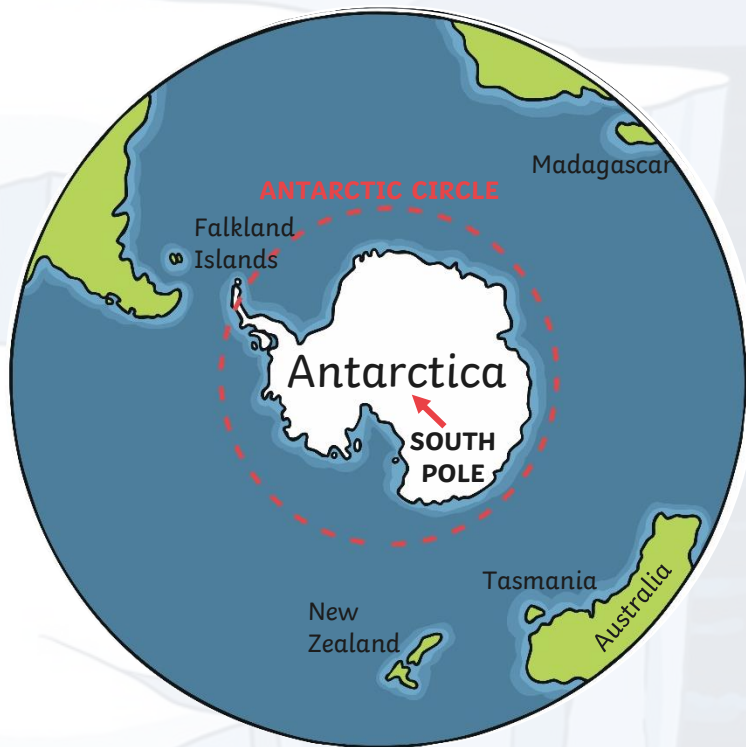
Antarctica

Do you recognise any other places on the map?



Antarctica

Antarctica is at the bottom of the Earth. It includes the areas around the South Pole. Unlike the Arctic, Antarctica is actually a continent. This is because Antarctica is an area of land, covered in ice.



Antarctica isn't officially owned by anyone, so it is not called a country. It has no government and no towns or cities.

It is looked after by a special agreement called **The Antarctic Treaty**. This means that the environment is protected and Antarctica can only be used for peaceful purposes. More than 50 countries have agreed to the treaty, including Russia, China, the UK and the USA.

Climate in Antarctica

Antarctica is the coldest and windiest place on Earth. The lowest temperature ever recorded here was -89°C ! The average temperatures range from about 10°C in the summer to -60°C in the winter. Antarctica's winter also lasts for 8 months.



Because it is so cold, over 98% of Antarctica is permanently covered in ice. The average thickness of this ice is about one mile! Antarctica is also home to the driest place on Earth. There are places in Antarctica which haven't had rain or snow in over 2 million years!

What do you think -89°C would feel like?

Physical Features in Antarctica

There are lots of different physical features in Antarctica. These include:

valleys



glaciers



seas



mountains



...and even volcanoes! There are 138 volcanoes in Antarctica. However, only two of them are currently active. The most active is called Mount Erebus and it has been active for about 1.3 million years.

Humans in Antarctica

No people permanently live in Antarctica because it is too cold for them to live there for a long time. Scientists take turns living there for short periods of time to study the ice and the animals. Tourists also sometimes visit in the summer. There are no towns or cities in Antarctica.

research stations for
scientists to work in



"Esperanza Station anta0060" by NOAA Photo Library is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

an Antarctic cruise ship



"Whalers Bay Deception Island Antarctica Fur Seal Silversea Silver Cloud 3 " by Gary Bembridge is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

a weather experiment



"Iceberg B-15A weather instrument" by NSF/Josh Landis, employee 1999-2001 is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

What do you think it would be like to live in Antarctica?

Polar Adaptations

There are lots of different animals that live in the polar regions. They all have special adaptations (skills or features they have developed) which allow them to live in such cold temperatures.

Many of these animals, such as seals and penguins, have a special layer of fat under their skin, called blubber. This helps to insulate their bodies and keep the heat in. They may also have thicker layers of fur.

Some of them have special adaptations on their feet, such as fur or sharp claws, to help them grip the slippery ice. They may also have wide or webbed feet to keep them from sinking in the snow.

a reindeer's thick coat



a penguin's sharp claws and webbed feet



"Penguin Feet" by Jon Rawlinson is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

Antarctic Animals

There are lots of different animals that live in Antarctica.

Emperor penguins are the biggest penguins in the world. They have a special flap of skin above their feet where they keep their egg (and then their chicks) warm and off of the cold ground.



"Emperor Penguins" by Christopher Michel is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Orcas are one of the fiercest predators in the sea. They eat seals, sea lions, penguins, squid, sea turtles, whales and even sharks. They have a thick layer of blubber to protect them from the cold water.



"Killerwhales jumping" by Robert Pittman is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Elephant seals are the largest of all the seals. They can dive over 4900 metres and can stay underwater for more than two hours.



Antarctic Animals

Albatrosses have the largest wingspan of any bird in the world. Their wingspan can measure over three metres! They can soar through the air for several hours at a time without needing to flap their wings.



"Wandering Albatross" by Ed Dunens is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Krill are very small shrimp-like creatures. Krill are able to shrink their bodies and go for long periods of time without eating, which helps them survive the winter months.



"Krill" by Sophie Webb/NOAA is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Dusky dolphins are very social and playful. They have a curved dorsal fin (the fin on their back) which helps them to change direction quickly to swim away from predators.



"A wild dusky dolphin named 'Nox'" by AllenMcC is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Leopard seals have a thick layer of fat to keep them insulated in cold water. They can dive underwater for up to 15 minutes.



Quick Facts About Antarctica

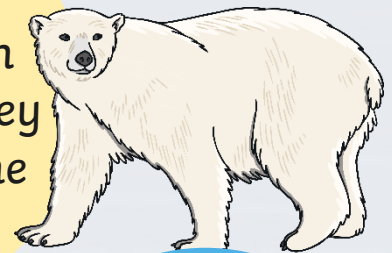
Antarctica is the fifth-largest continent in the world and is about 50 times the size of the UK.

70% of Earth's freshwater and 90% of its ice is in Antarctica.

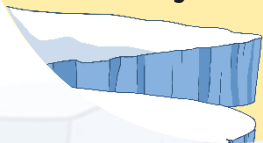


Antarctica is the only continent without any reptiles.

There are no polar bears in Antarctica. They only live in the Arctic.



The largest recorded iceberg in Antarctica was bigger than the size of Jamaica!



Antarctica is one of the few places on Earth where you won't find any ants.



Antarctica is called a desert. This is because it has very little rain.

