

Really cold, or really, really cold?

Both the Arctic (North Pole) and the Antarctic (South Pole) are cold because they don't get any direct sunlight. The Sun is always low on the horizon, even in the middle of summer. In winter, the Sun is so far below the horizon that it doesn't come up at all for months at a time. So the days are just like the nights—cold and dark.

Even though the North Pole and South Pole are “polar opposites,” they both get the same amount of sunlight. But the South Pole is a lot colder than the North Pole. Why? Well, the Poles are polar opposites in other ways too.

The Arctic is ocean surrounded by land. The Antarctic is land surrounded by ocean.

The ocean under the Arctic ice is cold, but still warmer than the ice! So the ocean warms the air a bit.

Antarctica is dry—and high. Under the ice and snow is land, not ocean. And it's got mountains. The average elevation of Antarctica is about 7,500 feet (2.3 km). And the higher you go, the colder it gets.



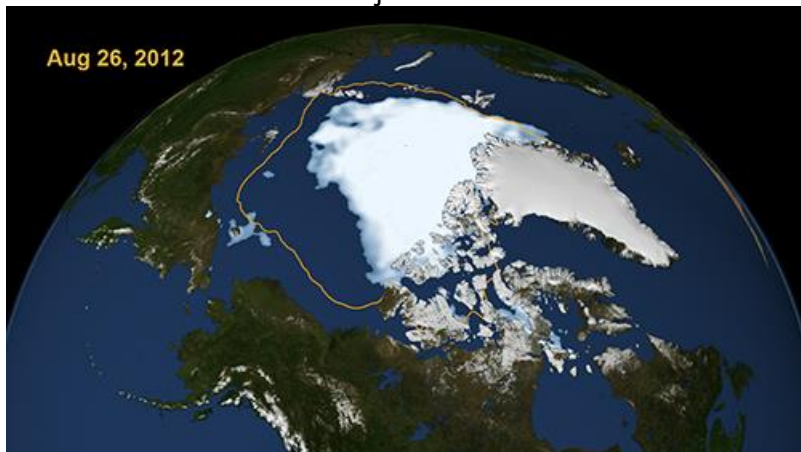
This 3-D topographical view of Antarctica gives an idea of its high elevations and mountains.

Time of year	Average (mean) temperature	
	North Pole	South Pole
Summer	32° F (0° C)	-18° F (-28.2° C)
Winter	-40° F (-40° C)	-76° F (-60° C)

What's going on this year?

At the end of September 2012, the Arctic ice was the smallest on record. If the ice were on a diet, we would say that it was very successful. But, just as with people on diets, shrinking too much is not healthy.

Arctic and Antarctic Land information



This image shows the area covered by Arctic sea ice on Aug. 26, 2012. On this day, the sea ice dipped to its smallest extent ever recorded in more than three decades of satellite measurements, according to scientists from NASA and the National Snow and Ice Data Center.

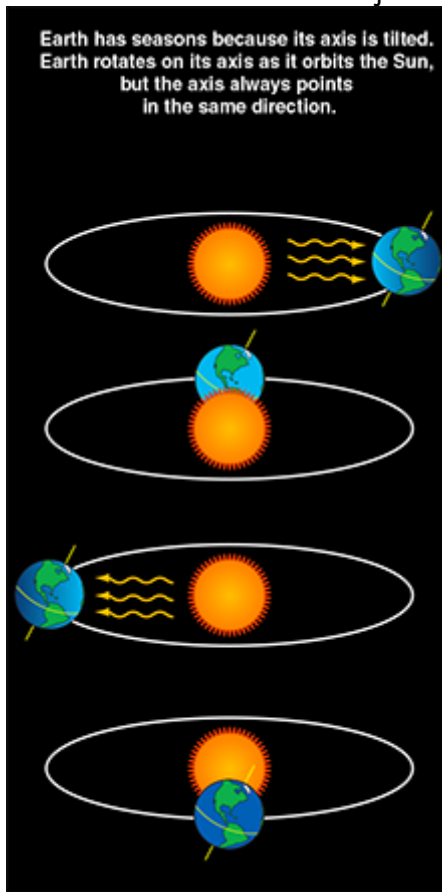
The Arctic ice is shrinking because the ocean under the ice is warming. The warming ocean means Earth's climate is getting warmer.

The Antarctic's climate is also warming, but not as fast, because it is less affected by the warming ocean.

Both the Arctic and the Antarctic are doing pretty much what climate scientists have predicted. We need to listen to them about other things they predict.



Arctic and Antarctic Land information



Earth's axis of rotation is tilted. The North Pole always points in the same direction during Earth's year-long journey around the Sun. So, different parts of Earth get the Sun's direct rays throughout the year. That is why we have seasons!



The emperor penguin is one of a few species that can survive the harsh cold of Antarctica.



Fun Arctic Facts for Kids

Check out our fun arctic facts for kids and enjoy learning a range of interesting information about the Arctic region.

Find out where the Arctic is, what countries are part of it, how cold it can get, what kind of animals live there and much more. Read on and enjoy learning some cool facts related to the Arctic.

- The Arctic region is found in the northernmost part of Earth.
- As well as the Arctic Ocean, the Arctic region is made up of parts of Russia, Greenland, Canada, USA, Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Finland.
- Indigenous people who live in the Arctic have adapted to the cold weather and harsh environmental conditions.
- The name 'Arctic' comes from a Greek word meaning 'near the bear'.
 - The coldest recorded temperature in the Arctic is around -68°C (-90°F).
- Over recent years, the Arctic region has shrunk due to global warming.
- Small shrubs can grow in warmer parts of the Arctic, as well as various herbs, mosses and lichens.
- A number of different types of animals make their home in the arctic, including polar bears, wolverines, squirrels, birds, walrus and seals.
- The Arctic region is home to the North Pole.
- The Arctic has a number of natural resources, including fish, oil, gas and various minerals.
- Head to the opposite end of the globe and check out our [fun Antarctica facts](#).

Fun Antarctica Facts for Kids

Check out our fun Antarctica facts for kids and enjoy a wide range of interesting information related to the icy continent found at the southern part of the globe.

Read how big Antarctica is, how cold it can get, what kind of animals live there, how much ice it contains and much more.

- Antarctica is the southernmost continent on Earth.
- The South Pole is found in Antarctica.
- Antarctica is surrounded by the Southern Ocean.
- Antarctica is bigger than Europe and almost double the size of Australia.
- Most of Antarctica is covered in ice over 1.6 kilometres thick (1 mile).
- Because it experiences such little rain, Antarctica is considered a desert.
- The coldest recorded temperature on Earth occurred in 1983 at Vostok Station, Antarctica, measuring a rather chilly $-89.2\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-128.6\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$).
- While humans don't permanently reside in Antarctica, several thousand people live and work at various research facilities found on the continent.
- While Antarctica features harsh living conditions, a number of plants and animals have adapted to survive and call the icy continent home.
- Well known animals that live in Antarctica include penguins and seals.
- The name 'Antarctica' comes from a Greek word meaning 'opposite to the north'.
- Around 90% of the ice on Earth is found in Antarctica.
- Sea levels would rise around 60m (200ft) if all the ice in Antarctica were to melt.
- Head to the opposite end of the globe and check out our [fun Arctic facts](#).