



# Antarctica

## Antarctic region

Antarctica is the world's fifth-largest continent and is covered in an ice sheet that is up to 4800m thick. It is the coldest, driest, highest and windiest continent on Earth. Temperatures can drop to  $-89^{\circ}\text{C}$ , there is little precipitation, and wind speeds can reach 80km per hour. There are only two native species of flowering plants in Antarctica, but there is a rich sea life, including the emperor penguin, humpback whale and leopard seal. No people live permanently in the Antarctic. However, scientists stay for part of the year to carry out research and tourists visit in the summer months to see the landscape and wildlife.

### Polar landscapes



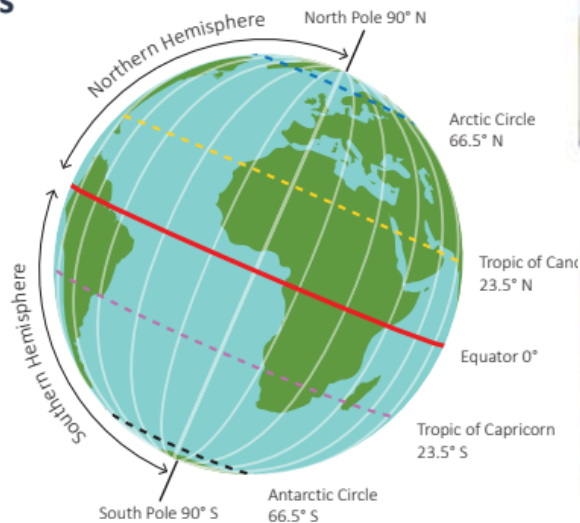
emperor penguin



humpback whale

## The polar regions

The Earth has two polar regions: the Arctic Circle in the Northern Hemisphere and the Antarctic Circle in the Southern Hemisphere. Polar regions have long, cold winters and temperatures mostly below freezing. The weather can be very windy with little precipitation.



## Key vocabulary:

<b>Antarctic Circle</b>	An imaginary circle of latitude that lies $66.5^{\circ}$ south of the equator. Everything south of this line is known as the Antarctic.
<b>Arctic Circle</b>	An imaginary circle of latitude that lies $66.5^{\circ}$ north of the equator. Everything north of this line is known as the Arctic.
<b>boreal forest</b>	A large area of wetland covered in conifer trees. Boreal forests are found in countries that are in or near the Arctic Circle.
<b>climate</b>	The usual weather conditions that occur in a place over a long period.
<b>horizon</b>	The line where the sky appears to meet the Earth.
<b>indigenous</b>	Occurring naturally or originating in a particular place.
<b>native</b>	Referring to the animals and plants that occur naturally in a place.
<b>North Pole</b>	The most northern geographical point of the Earth.
<b>polar day</b>	Near constant daylight in the Arctic or Antarctic during the summer months when the Sun does not set below the horizon. Also known as Midnight Sun.
<b>polar night</b>	Near constant darkness in the Arctic or Antarctic during the winter months when the Sun does not rise above the horizon.
<b>precipitation</b>	Water that falls from clouds in the sky as rain, snow, hail or sleet.
<b>South Pole</b>	The most southern geographical point of the Earth.
<b>tundra</b>	An area of land where it is too cold for trees to grow and the ground below the surface is permanently frozen.