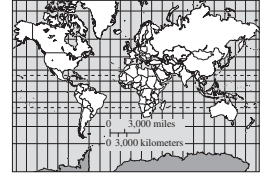


Physical Geography of Antarctica

Location: Antarctica is located in the southern hemisphere almost entirely within the Antarctic Circle. It surrounds the South Pole, the southernmost place on Earth. It is bordered by the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean.



Size: Antarctica is approximately 5,400,000 square miles (14,000,000 km²) in area, which makes it one and one-half times larger than the United States. It is the fifth-largest continent after South America. The greatest distance from coastline to coastline is about 2,800 miles (4,400 km). The shortest distance is about 1,600 miles (2,600 km).

The highest point on the continent is the summit of Vinson Massif at 16,864 feet (5,140 km). The lowest point has yet to be discovered.

Climate: The climate throughout Antarctica is very cold to extremely cold. During spring and summer months (mid-September to mid-March) Antarctica is in continuous sunlight, and in fall and winter it is in continuous darkness. Scientists consider Antarctica to be a desert because of its lack of native plant and animal life.

Temperature in Antarctica varies with location. Along the coast, summer temperatures climb to about 30° F (-1° C) but drop to about -40° F (-4° C) in the winter. In the interior the average temperature is about -57° F (-14° C), but temperatures at or below -100° F (-38° C) are not unusual.

Precipitation is mostly snow in Antarctica, although fog and rain occur along the coast. Coastal areas receive more precipitation than the interior, 12–24 inches (30–60 cm) compared to 4–6 inches (10–15 cm).

Landforms: About 98% of Antarctica is covered by ice. In some places this icecap is 14,000 feet (4,270 m) thick. That is more than 2.5 miles (4.8 km). This cap contains 70% of the world's fresh water or 90% of its ice.

Antarctica has one major mountain range, the Transantarctic Mountains, which is really a collection of ranges. This collection stretches across the entire continent, from the western coastline of Ross Sea to the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. At one point it appears as if there is a break in the range; however, this is only because the mountains in this area are covered by ice and snow. The highest peak in the chain is Vinson Massif.

Because of the cold temperatures, there are no lakes or rivers on Antarctica. Instead, there are huge, moving masses of ice called *glaciers*. Actually, all of the ice of Antarctica is moving toward the sea. It is constantly being forced outward by its own weight. Antarctic glaciers, however, move faster than the rest of the ice.

A permanent ice formation that extends out over the sea is called an *ice shelf*. Several massive ice shelves have formed in the coastal areas of Antarctica. For example, much of Ross Sea and Weddell Sea are covered by ice shelves.

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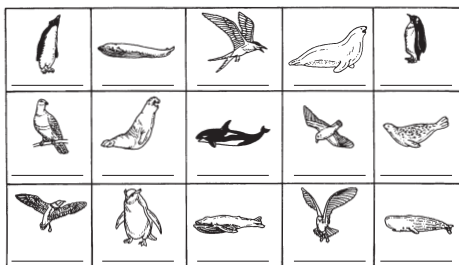


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Animals of Antarctica

The animals listed below live at least part of each year on and/or around Antarctica. In the first column, identify the animal as a *mammal* or a *bird*. In the second column, write "endangered" if the animal is on the endangered species list. Match the names with the correct pictures.

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1. Adelie penguin | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Arctic tern | _____ | _____ |
| 3. blue whale | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Cape pigeon | _____ | _____ |
| 5. elephant seal | _____ | _____ |
| 6. emperor penguin | _____ | _____ |
| 7. fulmar | _____ | _____ |
| 8. humpback whale | _____ | _____ |
| 9. leopard seal | _____ | _____ |
| 10. orca | _____ | _____ |
| 11. petrel | _____ | _____ |
| 12. Ross seal | _____ | _____ |
| 13. skua | _____ | _____ |
| 14. sperm whale | _____ | _____ |
| 15. Rockhopper penguin | _____ | _____ |



Answer Key: 1. bird, 2. bird, 3. mammal, endangered, 4. bird, 5. mammal, 6. bird, 7. bird, 8. mammal, 9. mammal, 10. mammal, 11. bird, 12. mammal, 13. bird, 14. mammal, 15. bird

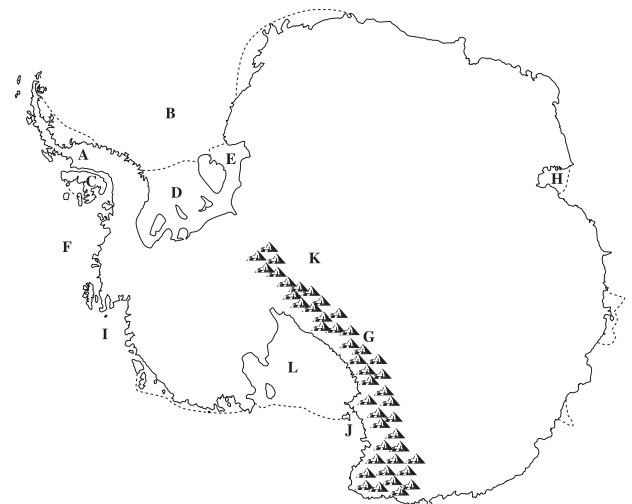
Pictures starting at top left: 6, 3, 2, 12, 1, 4, 5, 10, 7, 9, 13, 15, 8, 11, 14

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Physical Features of Antarctica

Some major features of Antarctica are labeled with letters on the map. Match the letters to the names of the features listed below.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Amundsen Sea | _____ 7. McMurdo Sound |
| _____ 2. Alexander Island | _____ 8. Ronne Ice Shelf |
| _____ 3. Antarctic Peninsula | _____ 9. Ross Ice Shelf |
| _____ 4. Bellingshausen Sea | _____ 10. South Pole |
| _____ 5. Filchner Ice Shelf | _____ 11. Weddell Sea |
| _____ 6. Lambert Glacier | _____ 12. Transantarctic Mountains |



Answer Key: 1. I, 2. C, 3. A, 4. F, 5. E, 6. H, 7. J, 8. D, 9. L, 10. K, 11. B, 12. G

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