

WHERE'S THE SOUTH POLE?

The South Pole is the southernmost point on Earth. It's located in the region below the Antarctic Circle. The South Pole is mostly ice. But despite how cold it is there, most of its snowfall occurs in only a small part of the continent, mainly on the Antarctic Peninsula and the surrounding coastal regions. Antarctica, the landmass at the South Pole, is the only continent in the world not permanently inhabited by humans. However, scientists and whalers from other continents come there regularly.



The Antarctic Peninsula is the northernmost part of Antarctica. It's an important breeding ground for seabirds, seals, and penguins.

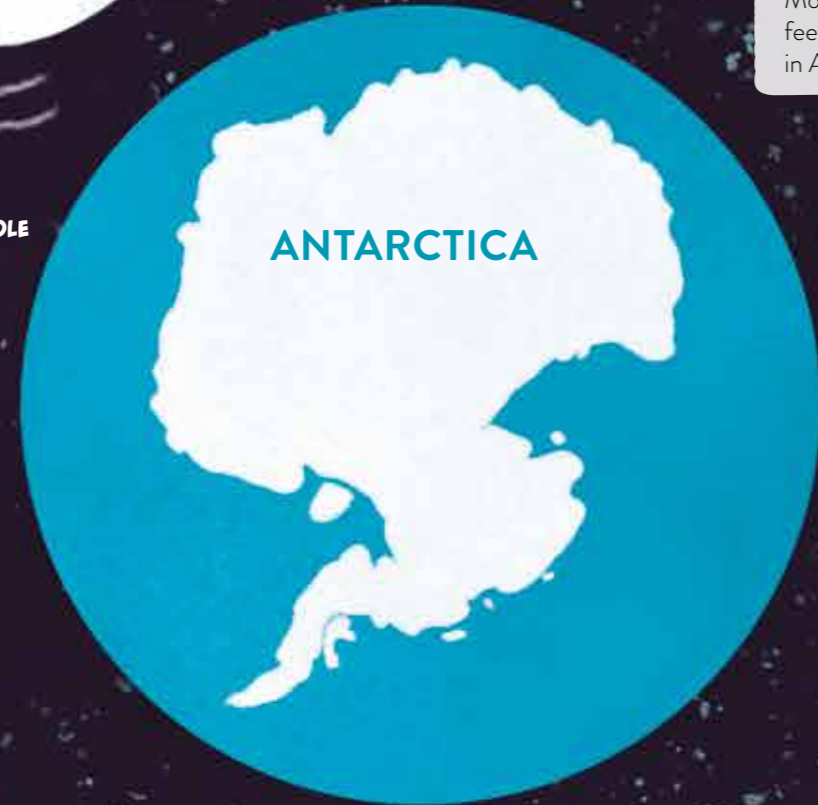
Mount Vinson is, at 16,050 feet, the highest mountain in Antarctica.

The Ross Ice Shelf was once called "the Barrier" by scientists because it prevented them from sailing further south.

The southernmost point of the South Pole region is marked by a metal ball on a striped pole. Due to the force of the huge ice sheet on which the pole stands, it shifts about 30 feet per year. That's why, each year, scientists have to return it to the right spot.



TOP VIEW OF THE SOUTH POLE

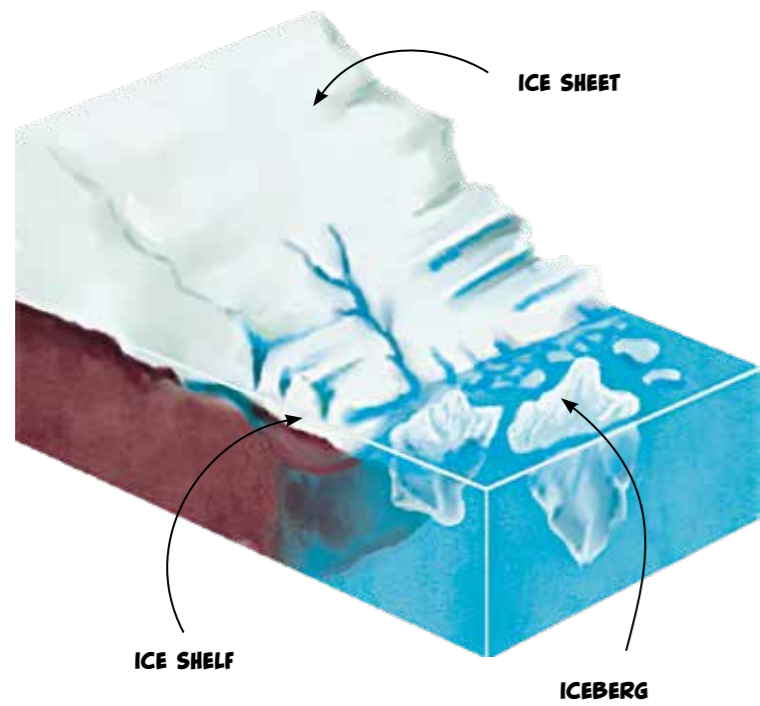


The South Pole is very special. Besides the North Pole, it's the only spot in the world without cardinal points. If you stand precisely at the South Pole, there's no east, south, or west. You can only go north.



A CONTINENT COVERED IN ICE

About 98 percent of the surface of Antarctica is covered in ice. In some spots, the ice layer is as much as 3 miles thick! That's more than half the height of Mount Everest, the highest mountain on Earth. In the winter, the sea around Antarctica freezes, expanding the area of Antarctic sea ice even more.



- ▶ Ice sheets are formed by an accumulation of snow and ice over thousands of years. On Earth, there are two great ice sheets: Antarctica at the South Pole and Greenland at the North Pole.
- ▶ Ice shelves lie in the sea and are connected to ice sheets.
- ▶ Icebergs form when ice shelves break off from ice sheets. Most icebergs at the South Pole have flat tops, enough so that small planes or helicopters could land on them. When ice shelves melt, they create several small icebergs of different shapes.



An ice sheet is made up of compressed snow. When the snowflakes turn into ice under high pressure, air bubbles are created, and when the ice melts, they burst, making a beautiful sound.

HOW THICK IS THE ANTARCTIC ICE SHEET?

The Antarctic ice sheet is a thick layer of compressed ice and snow that formed over 5 million years ago. The ice sheet covers an area of nearly 5.4 million square miles—most of the continent of Antarctica. On average, the ice sheet is more than a mile thick, but the thickest point is nearly 3 miles deep. That's almost six times the length of the tallest building on Earth, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai (2,722 feet).

