

## Antarctica

- Antarctica, the fifth largest continent in size and about half the size of America. It is located on the underside of the globe. No continent is further south than Antarctica. Near the center of the land mass is the South Pole.
- This continent is almost completely covered in layers of ice and snow. The average thickness is approximately one mile. Only 2% of the land is not covered in ice. The ice often looks bluish.
- Antarctica has no countries and no portions of the continent are owned by any country. There is no government like other countries or continents in the world. Several countries do claim sovereignty on different parts though. The Antarctic Treaty System regulates the relationship between these nations.
- Antarctica has no trees and no reptiles.

• 11% of the land that is part of Antarctica is composed of floating ice shelves. These shelves are formed when ice piled on mountains and terrain slide down the coast and into the water. The continental ice sheet contains about 7 million miles of ice, 90% of the world's

total. In fact, there is as much ice on Antarctica as there is water in the Atlantic Ocean. Antarctica has the highest average elevation of any continent which is due to all the ice on it!

• The weather is extreme. Antarctica has high winds and the temperatures are between -40 and -90 degrees Fahrenheit. Air humidity is near zero. The warmest temperature ever recorded on the continent is 58.3 degrees F, which was recorded on January 5, 1974 at the Vanda Station.

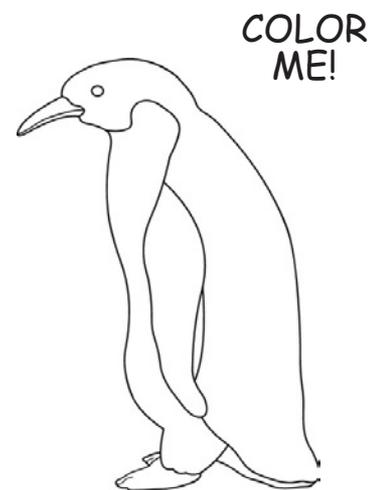
• Antarctica has little rainfall, so it is considered a desert!

• Flora and fauna do live on the continent. The most well known fauna are the King and Emperor Penguins, seals and a bird, the Snow Petrel.

• Captain James Cook and his expedition ships are the first Europeans in recorded history to cross the Antarctic Circle in January 1773. The first recorded landing on the continent was a seal hunter named John Davis in February 1821.

• Churches have been established on the Antarctic. One is Catholic, one non-denominational Christian, one Bulgarian Orthodox and one Russian Orthodox. There are up to 5,000 temporary residents in the summer. They are mainly researchers and explorers. During the winter, the population is only around 1,000 researchers. There are no permanent residents.

• During the South Pole winter, which is late March to late September, it is dark all the time. In the summer, it is light 24 hours a day, even though the sun is very low in the sky.



Adelie Penguin in Brown Bluff, Antarctica