

Antarctic vs. Arctic Comparison

While the Earth's polar regions are similar in many ways, the North and South Poles also display stark differences. Here is a brief comparison of the two poles.

Antarctic

Arctic

Natural Features

- The Antarctic is a continent surrounded by ocean.
 - Icebergs are calved from glaciers and shelf ice year round, and may measure in excess of 25 cubic miles.
 - The sea ice accumulates annually and more than doubles the size of the continent.
 - Over 97% of the Antarctic landmass is covered by the unbroken South Polar ice sheet.
 - Elevation at the South Pole is 9300 feet above sea level, although the bedrock is only 100 feet above sea level the annual mean temperature at the South Pole is -58°F.
- The Arctic is an ocean surrounded by continents.
 - Icebergs are calved from glaciers and are seasonal. The icebergs are measured in cubic yards.
 - Sea ice accumulates over several years.
 - Land ice is found in limited areas, the largest being the Greenland ice sheet.
 - The elevation at the North Pole is 3 feet of sea ice. The bedrock is located 1400 feet below sea level.
 - The annual mean temperature at the North Pole is 0°F.

Plants and Animals

- No tundra or tree lines. The subantarctic zone is marked by the Antarctic Convergence.
 - No terrestrial mammals.
 - Marine mammals include whales, porpoises and seals.
- The Tundra is well developed and marked by a tree shrubline.
 - Terrestrial mammals include musk ox, reindeer, caribou, fox, hare, wolf, lemming, bears, and more.
 - Marine mammals include whales, porpoises, seals, and amphibious mammals.

Human Activities

- No record of primitive humans and no native groups.
 - The population south of 60°S is sparse and occurs at scattered scientific stations.
 - There is no exploitation of terrestrial resources.
 - First crossing of the Antarctic Circle was by James Cook on January 17, 1773.
- There are native people with a long cultural record and ethnic groups on continents all around the Arctic.
 - Human population north of 60°N is in excess of 2 million with modern settlements.
 - There is widespread exploitation of natural resources and technological development.
 - The first crossing of the Arctic Circle is prehistoric.