

Antarctic Conditions Fact Sheet

Land

Ice and snow cover 98 percent of the continent.

Climate

Winter extends from May through August. Summer extends from December through February. Temperatures during January and February range from -15°C to -35°C inland and reach up to 0°C along the coast. Antarctica's inland plateau has been called a polar desert. Very little moisture is in the air there, so dehydration can be a major concern for people working on the ice.

Wind and Wind Chill

Winds range from about 8 kilometers per hour to 64 kilometers per hour. Below freezing temperatures and high winds can lower the temperature to -100°C and decrease the visibility to less than 30 meters.

Storms

Storms arrive quickly. They can be very localized—the sun might be shining in one area while a severe snowstorm is happening just 80 kilometers away. Blowing snow can create “whiteout” conditions with zero visibility. Low clouds on the horizon contribute to low visibility and make it hard to see crevasses and cracks in the ice. When in unknown territory, it is advised to stay put during a storm.

Light

Due to the polar location, continuous daylight occurs during the summer, the time when scientists conduct their research.

Resources

Find more on cold weather survival and Antarctic weather at the following Web sites:

Antarctic Weather

www.antarcticconnection.com/antarctic/weather/index.shtml

Provides news and information about Antarctic weather.

Antarctica: The Frozen Continent

www.divediscover.who.edu/antarctica/weather.html

Supplies weather information and a method to estimate effective temperature.

Day-to-Day Polar Life

www.usatoday.com/weather/resources/askjack/ajckicel.htm

Considers what is needed to survive in Antarctica.

Outdoor Action Guide to Hypothermia and Cold Weather Injuries

www.princeton.edu/~oa/safety/hypocold.shtml

Reviews how the body loses heat to the environment, how the body regulates core temperature, and how to diagnose and treat hypothermia.

