Quick facts

1. Antarctica is the coldest, windiest and most remote continent on Earth
2. There are no native peoples in Antarctica
3. There are no polar bears in Antarctica
4. There are about 5 million penguins in Antarctica
5. Eighteen countries operate year-round scientific research stations
6. During the Antarctic summer as many as 10,000 scientists and support staff work there – but only about 1000 in winter
7. Each year around 40,000 tourists visit the icy continent
8. Antarctica is a continent for science
9. The Antarctic Treaty designates the continent as a ‘natural reserve, devoted to peace and science’
10. Captain Cook was the first person to circumnavigate the continent in the 1770s
11. Scott and Shackleton undertook purely scientific expeditions – a tradition which continues to the present
12. British Antarctic Survey has carried out most of the UK’s Antarctic research for over seventy years
13. The discovery of the spring-time Antarctic ozone hole in 1985 changed the world when the Montreal Protocol ban CFCs and halons in 1987
14. By 1993 most of the ozone over Antarctica had disappeared
15. Scientists expect the ‘hole’ to disappear in about 100 years if the world complies with the Montreal Protocol
16. The scale of Antarctic science is immense – from insects and microbes studied under the microscope – to the continent-sized ice sheet best appreciated from satellite imagery
17. Antarctic science is crucial for understanding how the Earth operates as a global system
18. Antarctica is a significant driver of global climate
19. Antarctic marine and lake sediments reveal the regional pattern that is a key to unravelling global changes.
20. The continent contains unique ice core records that have unprecedented detail about the causes and results of climate change
21. The inland Antarctic ice sheet is up to 4 km thick
22. The Antarctic is the ultimate icy wilderness
23. Only 0.6% of Antarctica is free of ice
24. The ocean surrounding Antarctica provides a virtually impenetrable barrier of sea ice which in winter covers an area around one and half times the area of the continent
25. In global terms 90% of the world’s ice is located in the Antarctic
26. The purity of Antarctic ice is unmatched anywhere else in the world
27. The Antarctic has not always been totally icy
28. When dinosaurs roamed and hibernated through the long polar winter there was enough vegetation to sustain them
29. Whilst the Antarctic landmass is icy-covered and barren, the surrounding ocean is biologically rich
30. Whales seals and sea birds are important parts of the ecosystem

<https://www.bas.ac.uk/science/science-and-society/education/antarctic-factsheet-geographical-statistics/>