

Polar oceans

Arctic Ocean

The Arctic Ocean is located around the North Pole within the Arctic Circle in the Northern Hemisphere. The northernmost parts of Europe, Asia and North America surround the Arctic Ocean.

The Arctic Ocean is the smallest and shallowest of Earth's five oceans. It covers an area of 14,090,000km². The average depth of this ocean is about 987m, and it is approximately 5449m at its deepest point.

The temperature of the Arctic Ocean remains at just above the freezing point of salt water throughout the year. Sea ice, glaciers and icebergs are typical physical features of this area of ocean.

Sea ice covers the Arctic Ocean for most of the year but the amount of ice and its thickness depends on the season. The sea ice is usually at its most extensive and thickest during the winter months of November to February. The surface of the ice is mostly covered by snow in winter. During the summer months of June to August, the sea ice melts and breaks up around the edges of the Arctic Ocean, exposing more of the ocean water.



Southern Ocean

The Southern Ocean surrounds the continent of Antarctica and the Antarctic Circle in the Southern Hemisphere. It includes the southernmost waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. Unlike other oceans of the world, the Southern Ocean only adjoins one continent.

The Southern Ocean is the second smallest of Earth's five oceans. It covers an area of 20,330,000km². The average depth of this ocean is between 4000–5000m, and it is approximately 7236m at its deepest point.

As with the Arctic Ocean, the Southern Ocean is contained in a polar climate, which means the area has persistent cold temperatures. Ice shelves, glaciers and icebergs are typical physical features of this area of ocean.

The Southern Ocean is different from all other oceans of the world because it has a strong ocean current, called the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, which circles Antarctica. This circular current happens because Antarctica is not connected to any other landmass. The Antarctic Circumpolar Current makes the Southern Ocean the coldest and windiest in the world. Where the Southern Ocean isn't frozen, powerful winds create huge waves and rough waters.

