

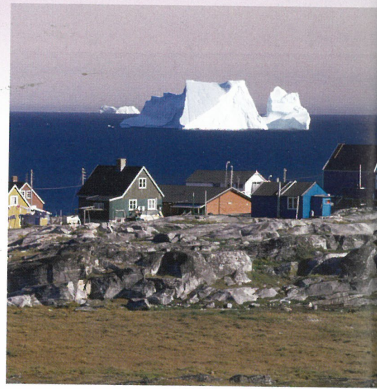
THE ARCTIC

THE Arctic is an ocean surrounding the North Pole. It is frozen all through the winter and still has lots of ice in summer. It is surrounded by the northernmost areas of three continents, but Greenland is the only truly Arctic country.

For most of the year the land is snow-covered. For 4 months of summer the sun never sets; only then do temperatures creep above freezing. The snow and frozen topsoil melt, but the deeper soil is still frozen, so the land is very marshy. This treeless landscape is called the *tundra*. Reindeer and caribou can be herded or hunted, but farming is impossible.

In recent years, oil and other rich mineral deposits have been found. Canada, the USA and Russia have military bases near the Arctic Ocean.

From the Atlantic Ocean, there is easy access to the Arctic Ocean. But from the Pacific Ocean, the only route to the Arctic Ocean is the narrow Bering Strait, between Siberia (Russia) and Alaska (USA), which freezes in winter.



▲ **Inuit homes in Godhavn, on the west coast of Greenland.** This village is called Qeqertarsuaq by the Inuit. In midsummer, most of the snow and ice has melted in this part of Greenland – but there is a big iceberg floating in the sea. These huge blocks of ice break off the ice-sheet that covers Greenland's mountains.

ARCTIC FACTS

- Fifth largest ocean – 14,056,000 sq km;
- World record for least sunshine;
- Surrounded by cold land;
- North Pole first reached in 1909;
- At the North Pole all lines of longitude meet and every direction is **SOUTH**.



▲ **Inuit (Eskimo) boy fishing for cod through a hole in the ice.** Fish are a good source of protein for families in the far north. This boy lives in Nunavik in northern Canada.

WILDLIFE IN GREENLAND

Land animals have to cope with very long winters. The Arctic fox turns white for camouflage.

