1 What is the Arctic?

Arctic definition cards

Map: National Snow and Ice Data Center

POLITICAL BORDERS

Political Borders

The Arctic Ocean and the North Pole are not owned by a single country. The Arctic region, defined by the Arctic Council (an intergovernmental forum), includes the northern territory of eight countries encircling the Arctic Ocean: the United States, Canada, Greenland, Russia, Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

1 What is the Arctic?

Arctic definition cards

Map: National Snow and Ice Data Center

TEMPERATURE

Temperature

The Arctic can be defined using the 10 degree isotherm weather line. An isotherm is a line used on weather, maps to show equal or constant temperature. The 10 degree isotherm refers to the point at which the average summer temperature, usually in July, doesn't rise above $10^{o}C$

1 What is the Arctic?

Arctic definition cards

Map: National Snow and Ice Data Center

TREELINE

Treeline

The treeline is defined as the point where large trees, such as spruce or pine, can no longer grow because of the climate. This can occur at high elevations, on mountains and at latitudes near the North and South poles. Generally, the growing season above the treeline is short because the climate is too cold and/or permafrost doesn't allow root systems to grow deep enough to develop.

The treeline is not a defined, straight line. Instead it is a fuzzy, meandering band, that reflects the way climate and microclimate affects living conditions. As you head further north, trees gradually get shorter and more spread out until they are no longer supported by the climate.

What is the Arctic?
Arctic definition cards

CULTURE

Indigenous peoples of the Arctic countries

Subdivision according to language families

Na'Dene family
- Athabaskan branch
- Eyak branch
- Tlingit branch
- Haida branch

Penutan family

Macro-Algonkian family
- Algonkian branch
- Wakasha branch
- Salish branch

Macro-Sioux family
- Sioux branch
- Iroquois branch

Indo-European family
- Germanic branch

Eskimo-Aleut family
- Inuit group of Eskimo branch
- Yupik group of Eskimo branch
- Aleut group

Uralic-Yukagiran family
- Finno-Ugric branch
- Samodic branch
- Yukagiran branch

Altaic family
- Turkic branch
- Mongolic branch
- Tunguso-Manchurian branch

Chukotko-Kamchatkan family

Ket (isolated language)

Nivkh (isolated language)

Ainu (isolated language)

Notes:

For the USA, only peoples in the State of Alaska are shown. For the Russian Federation, only peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East are shown.

Majority populations of independent states are not shown, not even when they form minorities in adjacent countries (e.g. Finns in Norway).

Areas show colours according to the original languages of the respective indigenous peoples, even if they do not speak these languages today.

Overlapping populations are not shown. The map does not claim to show exact boundaries between the individual groups.

In the Russian Federation, indigenous peoples have a special status only when numbering less than 50,000. Names of larger indigenous peoples are written in green.

compiled by W.K. Dallmann
© Norwegian Polar Institute

Map: Norwegian Polar Institute

Culture

The Arctic can be defined by the origins of Arctic Peoples' traditional languages. Some of the languages displayed on this map aren't spoken anymore. The map shows where traditional boundaries may have been and how traditional Arctic peoples may have defined the Arctic. Similar to the political borders definition, the cultural definition encompasses regions outside the Arctic Circle.

1 What is the Arctic?

Arctic definition cards

Map: Canadian Geographic

GEOGRAPHICAL BORDERS

Geographical borders

The Arctic Circle is defined as the latitude line of 66.33^{o}N. It is the southernmost latitude at which the sun remains either above the horizon for 24 hours in the summer solstice or below the horizon for 24 hours during the winter solstice.