

The Geography of the Arctic



The Arctic Circle (66° 33' N latitude) is an arbitrary line where eight different countries have sovereign territory within the area: **Canada, Denmark** (by way of Greenland and the Faroe Islands), **Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden,** and the **United States**.

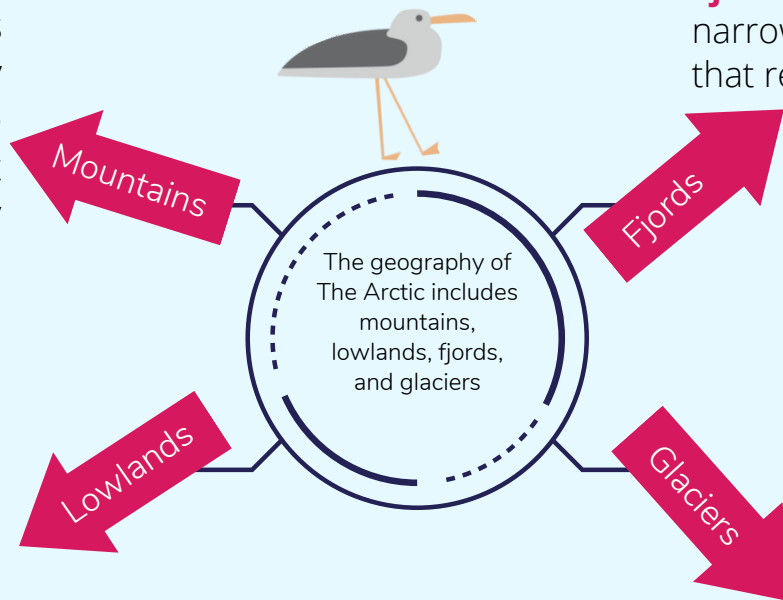
The continental landforms in The Arctic rest on massive blocks of crystalline rock called **shields**. (A shield is a massive block of exposed hard rock that has existed since the Earth's early history)



The Arctic is mostly an ocean surrounded by land, while the Antarctic is mostly land surrounded by water. In Winter the ocean freezes and causes sea ice to form.

The Arctic Ocean covers about 14 million square kilometres, making it the smallest of the world's oceans. The ocean is up to 5450m deep.

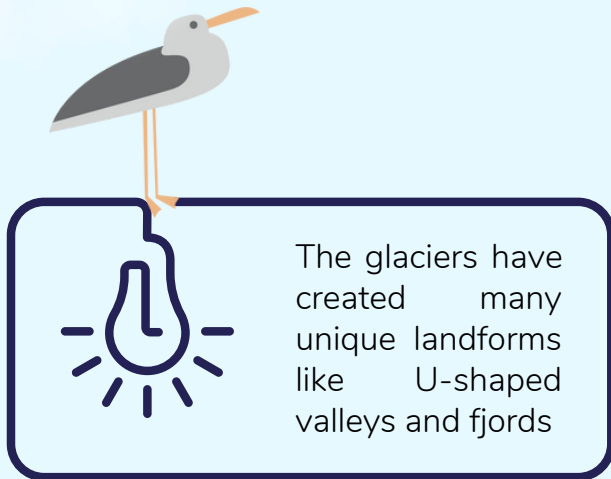
Around the margins, on the east and west coasts, the mountainous rim is penetrated by deep troughs. The **mountains** are highest in the east, where they exceed 10,000 feet.



Fjords are long, deep, narrow inlets of water that reach far inland.

The Arctic **Lowlands** is a small region that includes numerous islands in the Arctic Ocean and part of the far northern coast of Canada.

Glaciers are made up of fallen snow that, over many years, compresses into large, thickened ice masses. They are described as a river of ice!



Volcanic activity, past and present, also helps to shape the Arctic landscape

The Arctic has a geologically active past. Volcanic activity in the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve can be traced to events as old as 26-28 million years ago to as recent as 1,000 years ago.

