

This is for every brave researcher, for all the intelligent scientists, and for our wonderful planet.

Mario Cuesta Hernando

This is for my brave friend, Flor. While I was drawing these pictures, she was on the most dangerous sea voyage imaginable.

Raquel Martín

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ANTARCTICA

A Continent of Wonder

MARIO CUESTA HERNANDO
RAQUEL MARTÍN

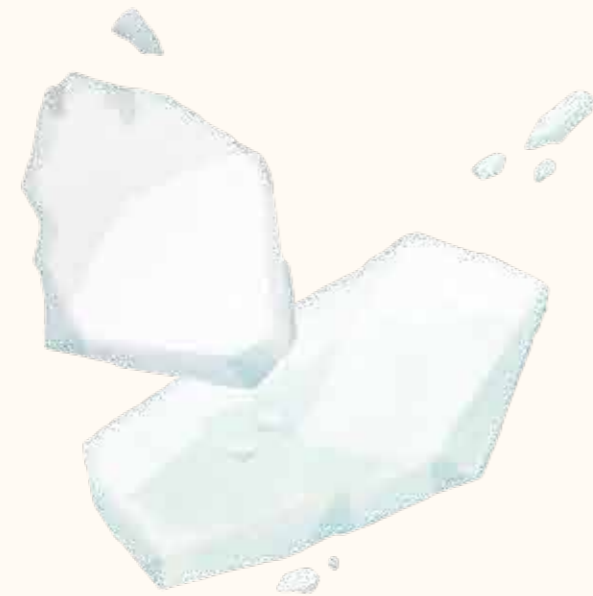


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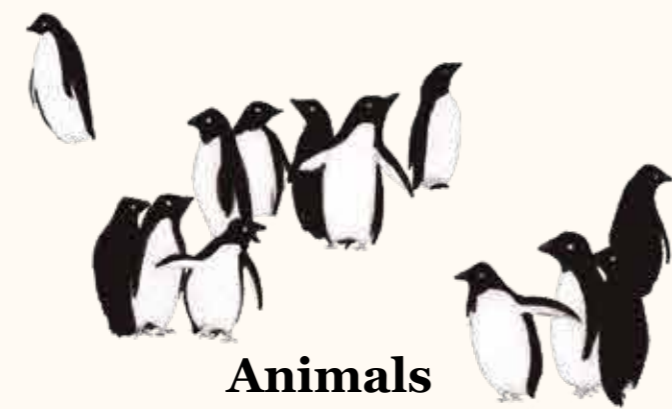


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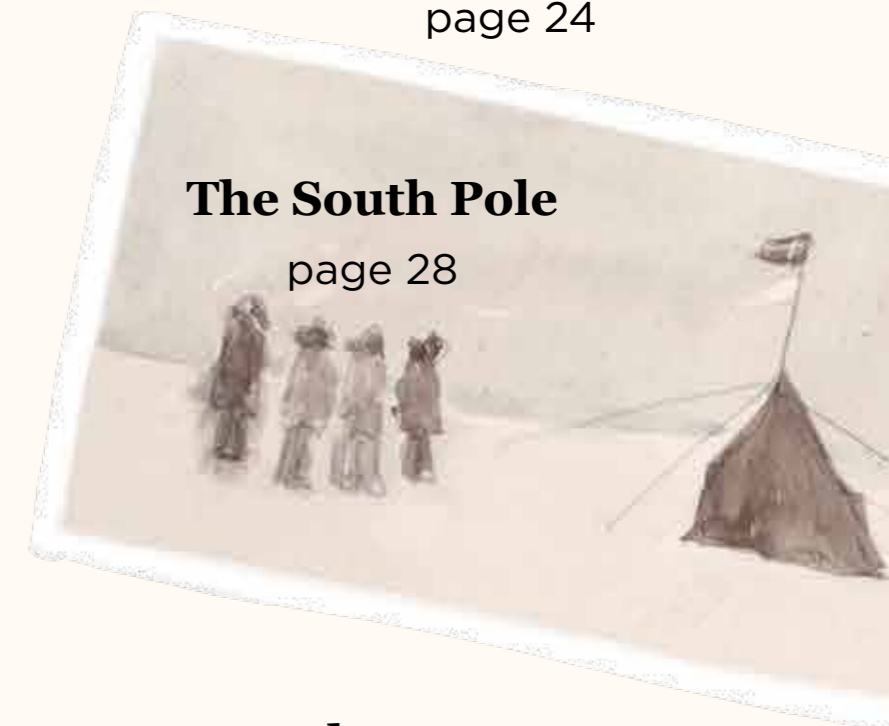
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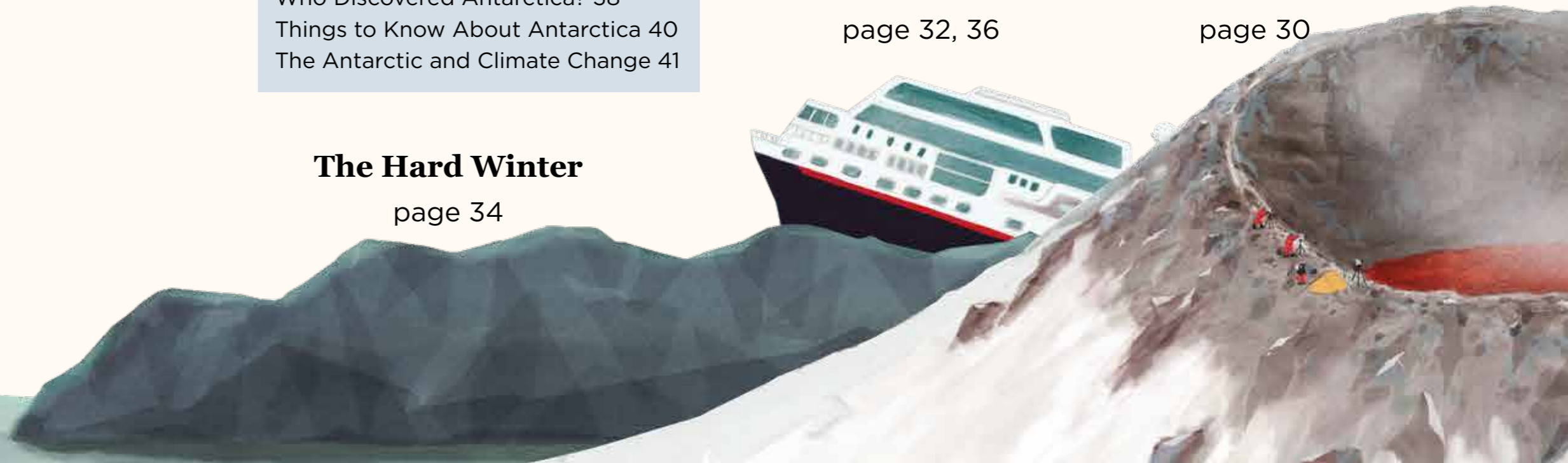
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Antarctica

A Continent of Wonder

What luck! The United States Antarctic Program has invited me on an expedition to the Antarctic. Together with scientists from all over the world, I will spend the summertime in the Southern Hemisphere from November to April. We are sailing together on the *Polar Star*, an oceanographic research vessel, and we will visit the McMurdo Station, a research station in the south of the continent next to the Ross Sea.

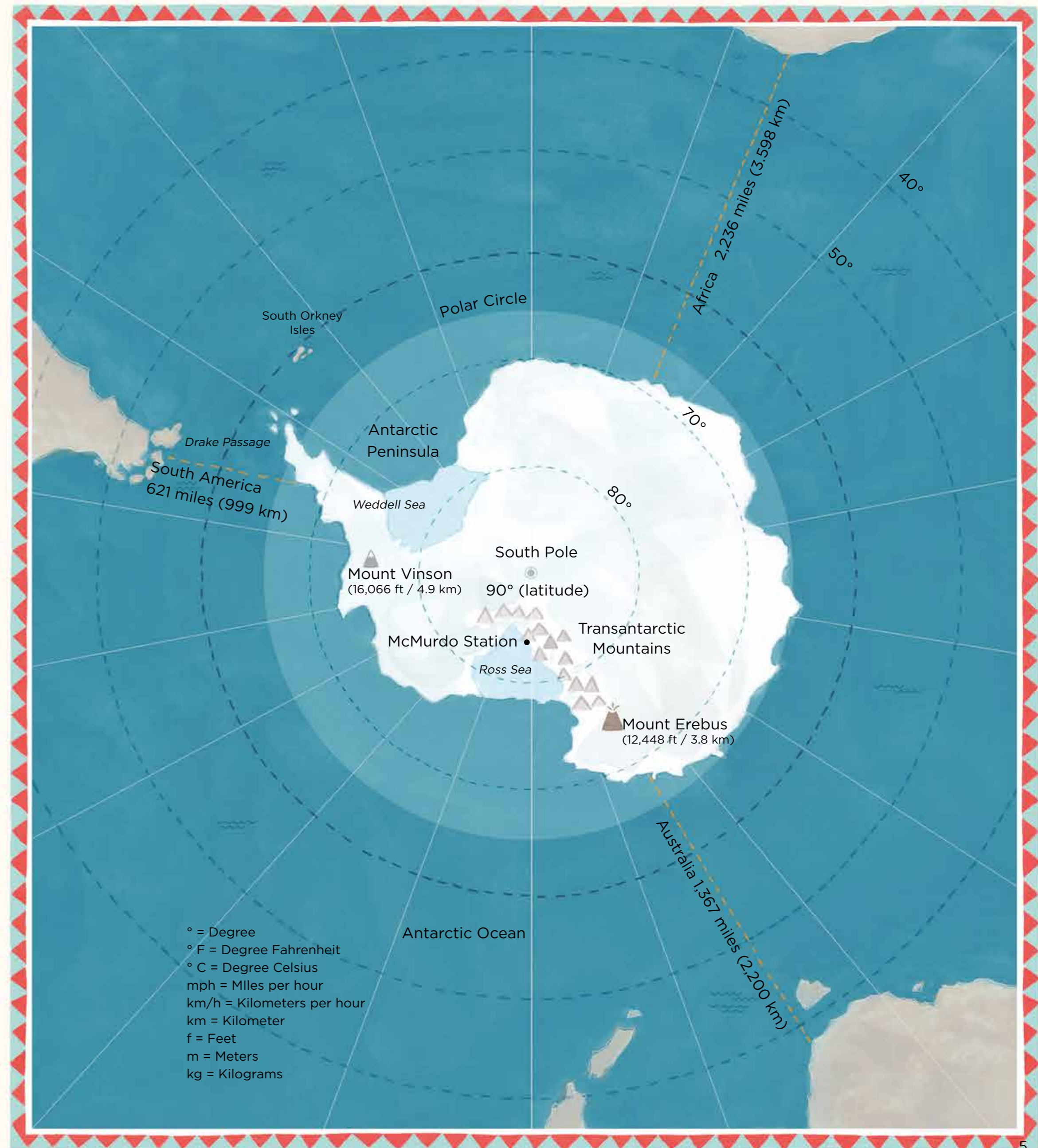
Antarctica is a truly record-breaking continent. The lowest temperatures (-128.6° F / -89.2° C) and the strongest hurricanes (199 mph / 327 km/h) on earth have been measured here. The ice can be up to 2.5 miles (4 km) thick! And 67 percent of the world's freshwater reserves are in the Antarctic—frozen solid.

I am so excited about this trip! But before we leave, can we just get something clear once and for all? Penguins live in Antarctica, polar bears do not. And there are polar bears in the Arctic, but no penguins.

Let's get started!



*I take my diary
on the journey.*





With a wingspan of almost 10 feet (3.33 m), the wandering albatross has the largest wings in the bird kingdom. Throughout the whole year, it is either in flight or floating on the ocean's surface. Thunderstorms like this one barely cause harm to the albatross.

Journey through the Drake Passage

Between Cape Horn, the southernmost tip of South America, and Antarctica stretches the wildest sea in the world, the dreaded Drake Passage. Ships like ours have to cope with waves up to 23 feet high (7 m), as well as fierce storms. In the past, sailors who had managed to get around Cape Horn used to wear an earring on their left ear as a sign of their courage. Ahoy and let's go Captain, no fear and full steam ahead!



Cape Horn

Breaking the Ice

Crunch . . . Crunch . . . CRUUUNCH! . . . The *Polar Star* makes its way through large packs of floating ice. This is what the layer of ice surrounding Antarctica is called. In winter, this belt of ice is a yard thick (3m) and can be the same size as the Antarctic continent itself. At this time of the year, only icebreakers—ships with reinforced bows—can get through the ice floes. A normal ship could get stuck in the ice or, even worse, the ice could poke a hole in its hull. The pack ice gradually melts in summer to the point where it is almost completely gone. And then in winter, the ice layer grows back again.

Here you can see the front part of the ship, called the bow.