

- DOCTOR: Well actually New Zealand is the second closest country to Antarctica Q21
and Christchurch is often used on Antarctic expeditions.
- INTERVIEWER: Right, so it's because of where we are . . . coupled with our historical
role. So tell us – what is the main purpose of the centre?
- DOCTOR: Well . . . we have two complementary roles. One is as a scientific base
for expeditions and research and the other is as an information centre.
- INTERVIEWER: Tell us something about the role as a scientific base.
- DOCTOR: We're able to provide information about what scientists should take Q22
with them to the South Pole – for example, the centre contains a
clothing warehouse where expeditions are supplied with suitable
clothing for the extreme conditions.
- INTERVIEWER: I suppose you need a bit more than your normal winter coat!
- DOCTOR: Yes, exactly and then there's also the specialist library and mapping
services.
- INTERVIEWER: Right. And which countries are actually located at the centre?
- DOCTOR: Well . . . the centre houses research programmes for New Zealand, for
The United States as well as for Italy . . . there's even a US post office
at the American airforce base here.
- INTERVIEWER: Really? And what does the visitor's centre offer?
- DOCTOR: Well, since very few people will ever experience the Antarctic first
hand, the visitors' centre aims to recreate the atmosphere of Q23
Antarctica. There's a mock camp site where you can see inside an
Antarctic tent and imagine yourself sleeping there. And the centre
also acts as a showcase for the unique international co-operation
which exists in Antarctica today.
- INTERVIEWER: What is it actually like at the South Pole? I know you've been there on
a number of occasions.
- DOCTOR: Yes, I have and each time I'm struck by the awesome beauty of the Q24
place. It's magnificent but you can really only visit it in the summer
months.
- INTERVIEWER: October to March.
- DOCTOR: Yes, because it's completely dark for four months of the year (*pause*)
. . . and in addition it has to be the coldest place on earth.
- INTERVIEWER: Colder than the North Pole? Why's that?
- DOCTOR: Well, unlike the North Pole, which is actually a frozen sea, Antarctica
is a land mass shaped like a dome, with the result that the winds blow Q25
down the slopes at speeds of up to 150 km an hour and that's what
makes it so cold. And one other interesting thing is that Antarctica is
the driest continent on earth, surprisingly, and so you have to drink
large amounts of water when you're there.
- INTERVIEWER: How old is Antarctica?
- DOCTOR: We're pretty sure it was part of a larger land mass but it broke away
from the rest of the continent 170 million years ago.
- INTERVIEWER: How can you be certain of this?