

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello, I'm Rob. Welcome to 6 Minute English. With me in the studio is Neil. Hello, Neil.

Neil

Hello, Rob.

Rob

And in this programme we're talking about tourism, but in a very special place: Antarctica. It is considered the last great **wilderness** on Earth. Wilderness means an area with no people and no agriculture because of the difficult living conditions.

Neil

Yes, in Antarctica there are only research stations with scientists and a few tourists.

Rob

Not so few – about 37,000 tourists are expected there this season. Many don't go ashore but there's no denying that it disturbs the environment.

Neil

That many?

Rob

Yes. We're asking if it is fair for tourists **to set foot** – it means to go to - such a sensitive environment. We'll also use some vocabulary related to Antarctica. By the way, Neil, do you know a lot about the South Pole?

Neil

I've been reading that the **ice caps** – these are the thick layers of ice permanently covering a vast area of land in the Arctic and Antarctic - are melting due to **global warming**...

Rob

Yes, and global warming is the increase in world temperatures due to the presence of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Neil

This gas and some others have been stopping heat from the Earth escaping into space. You know what, Rob? I would like to visit Antarctica before it melts too much. I want to see the penguins. They are very amusing animals!

Rob

They are, yes. But penguins aside, what large resource can be found in Antarctica? That's my question for you today. Is Antarctica:

- a) The world's largest coal field
- b) The world's largest gold source
- c) The world's largest diamond source

Neil

I'm gonna have a guess - because I don't know - that it's coal (a).

Rob

Coal. Right. Okay. Well, as usual, we'll give you the right answer at the end of the programme. Well, I love travelling but I wonder how that very sensitive environment in Antarctica is going to be preserved. That's why BBC reporter Juliet Rix's visit to Antarctica caught my attention.

Neil

I bet she is asking the same question as you, Rob.

Rob

Yes she is. Listen to what she has to say about the need to have some level of tourism in the Antarctic. What word does she use to describe people who defend a cause – in this case – the preservation of the region?

Juliet Rix, BBC reporter who went to Antarctica

*I'm all too aware that this is not my habitat. Like a scuba diver under the sea I'm an alien visitor in the penguins' world. Which makes me wonder: should I be here at all? Am I just by setting foot on this extraordinary continent polluting the last great wilderness on Earth? All visitors leave a footprint, admits my tour leader. And we all go to the same places, the accessible coastline, which is also where the penguins and seals go to breed. Nonetheless, he argues, carefully controlled tourism is not just okay but useful. Without a native population of its own, Antarctica needs **advocates**. And tourism creates a global constituency of people ready to support and indeed fund its preservation. Not everyone is convinced that the benefits outweigh the risks, but most are pragmatic:*

Neil

The reporter uses the word advocates – that's what we call people who defend a cause or an idea.

Rob

Juliet Rix's tour guide told her it's good that some people go to Antarctica and then, when they go back to their countries, they defend conservation and give money to organisations which work for the preservation of the environment.

Neil

Some people might not agree because if there are some companies making profit, it might be difficult to prevent an increase in tourism to Antarctica. And what control do they have over the tourists?

Rob

Juliet Rix tells us about the instructions given to her group when they approached Antarctica. She says that tourists must clean their clothes with a vacuum cleaner before they leave the ship to go on land. But why?

Juliet Rix, BBC reporter who went to Antarctica

*We're given a mandatory briefing before gathering for a "vacuum party". We bio secure ourselves hovering our clothes and kit and **disinfecting** our boots to ensure we introduce no alien species to Antarctica. There's no eating or smoking on land, and we're instructed to take nothing away, except photographs, and leave nothing behind. Not even a bit of yellow snow. So, don't drink too much at breakfast.*

Neil

The BBC reporter tells us that the group of tourists has to disinfect their boots. Disinfect means to clean something using chemicals or, in this case, vacuum to kill or remove bacteria. This is to avoid the risk of contaminating the region.

Rob

And to go to the toilet before leaving the ship. The ice is not your toilet!

Neil

No, it isn't. The penguins have exclusive rights on that! But what do you think about visiting Antarctica, Rob? Are you keen on paying the penguins a visit?

Rob

Absolutely, I would love to go there. What about you, Neil?

Neil

Yeah. I'd like to go because as I said, it's all about the penguins.

Rob

Well, let's stop dreaming about exotic trips and go back to the question I asked you earlier in the programme: what large resource can be found in Antarctica? Is it the world's largest coal field; the world's largest gold source or the world's largest diamond source?

Neil

And I said coal.

Rob

And you are indeed correct. Well done! And now no one is able to mine the coal because the Antarctic Treaty has banned the exploitation of resources for 50 years. What happens after that, who knows? Anyway, we're running out of time so let's remember some of the words we said today, Neil.

Neil

The words were:

wilderness

to set foot

ice caps

global warming

advocates

to disinfect

Rob

Thank you. Well, that's it for today. Go to www.bbclearningenglish.com to find more 6 Minute English programmes. Until next time. Goodbye!

Neil

Bye!

Vocabulary**wilderness**

area with no people and no agriculture because the living conditions are difficult

to set foot

to go to

ice caps

thick layer of ice permanently covering an area of land

global warming

the increase in world temperatures due to the presence of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere

advocates

people who defend a cause or an idea.

to disinfect

to clean something using chemicals or vacuum to kill or remove bacteria