

# Arctic ice cap near 2007 record minimum: Russia

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View of the Arctic ice pack in 2006. The polar ice cap in the Arctic has melted to near its 2007 record minimum level and in some areas is 50 percent smaller than average, Russia's environmental monitoring agency said Thursday.

The polar ice cap in the Arctic has melted to near its 2007 record minimum level and in some areas is 50 percent smaller than average, Russia's environmental monitoring agency said Thursday.

"According to the results of observations, the Arctic ice sheet is currently near the minimum that was observed in 2007 in the polar region," the Roshydromet agency said in a statement.

It said the ice sheet covered an area of 6.8 billion square kilometres (2.6 billion square miles) and was much smaller than normal in Russia's Arctic seas.

"The ice cap is smaller than the norm in all the Russian seas: by 56 percent in the southwest of the Kara Sea, by 20 percent in the northeast of the Kara Sea, by 40 percent in the Laptev Sea, by 14 percent in the East [Siberia](#) Sea and by 35 percent in Sea of Chukotka," it said.

"In September we can expect very easy navigation conditions in the Northern sea route," it said.

Russia has made the development of its [Arctic region](#) a strategic priority and is hoping to turn the Northern Sea Route into a major commercial transit route.

The melting of the ice sheet -- which is due to [global climate change](#) according to many experts -- has left the route along Russia's Arctic coast increasingly accessible.

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