

Image: The Italian–French Concordia research station in Antarctica

April 1 2015



Credit: ESA/IPEV/PNRA–B. Healey

The Italian–French Concordia research station in Antarctica sits in the largest desert in the world. Situated 3200 m above sea level with temperatures that can reach -80°C , oxygen is scarce and even walking to a tractor can be leave you out of breath – the crew live with permanent hypoxia.

Despite the hardship, scientists flock each year to this unique station to research the Antarctic continent, the climate, our planet and the stars. During the winter most researchers leave for warmer places but a core crew of up to 15 stays behind to tend the equipment and fend for themselves.

The station goes into lockdown in the winter months when the Sun never rises above the horizon. Tractors and [heavy machinery](#) are stored and temporary encampments put away. As the long darkness sets in, the crew ventures outside only when necessary to retrieve and store samples, maintain antennas and equipment or bring in supplies from the vast outside freezer.

ESA sponsors a medical doctor to spend almost a year at Concordia because living there is similar in many ways to living on another planet. The isolation, cramped quarters and low oxygen are aspects of life astronauts will have to endure to explore our Solar System.

Next year's [medical doctor](#) to go to Concordia will be chosen soon as the [deadline for application is this week](#).

Provided by European Space Agency

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